salt

April 2014

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

The Music Issue

Bands on the Run,
A Consummate Artist,
and a Fiery Angel

Azalea Madness

The Late Great Azalea Open
and an Azalea Queen's Salty Tongue

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GMCWH Robotic Surgery Team (from left): G. Daniel Robison IV, MD, FACOG, *Co-Director;*
K. Brooke Chalk, MD; Timothy L. Chase, MD, FACOG, FPMRS, *Co-Director;* H. Kyle Rhodes, MD, FACOG

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1728 Signature Place · Landfall

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2113 Forest Lagoon Place · Landfall

Stunning views of the Nicklaus golf course, pond and clubhouse in this 4 bedroom, 5 bath home which includes first and second floor master suites. Quiet cul-de-sac location set amidst gorgeous homes. **$729,000**

1063 Ocean Ridge Drive · Landfall

This elegant style residence is sited on a high, wooded bluff with 300' of intracoastal frontage, mahogany siding, Vermont slate roof, custom appointments and heavy molding throughout. **$2,295,000**

2104 Auburn Lane · Landfall

Privacy abounds in this well maintained all brick residence with walled garden and gunite pool. This gardener's delight boasts flowering trees and perennials throughout the year. **$819,000**

2200 Masons Point Place · Landfall

Enjoy nature and watching the action from this bluff location overlooking Landfall's par 3 #6 Nicklaus Ocean Course with Howe Creek and distant waterways views from this Cape Cod inspired design. **$849,500**

1457 Quadrant Circle · Landfall

Quality built NEW CONSTRUCTION brick home that overlooks a pond and features a 40' x 15' screened porch. This one of a kind residence by Logan Builders will be completed in May. **$849,900**

2320 Ocean Point Drive · Landfall

Modeled after a famous seaside Portugese Inn, this quality built residence includes 5,000 square feet of quality appointments. Double porches overlook the waterfront pool and provide the perfect oasis for relaxing and entertaining. **$2,495,000**

7527 Masonboro Sound Road

The lure of the sea has always been with us. Over 100 years ago, a magnificent Beaux Arts design mansion was cited on one of the area's prominent bluffs; nestled under a canopy of stately, moss draped live oaks. The tranquility of soft waves lapping at the shoreline and endless destinations that took sailors around the world drew in the likes of the Whitneys, Vanderbilts, Astors and McKoys. Today "Live Oaks At Masonboro" still stands on nearly 8 acres with 300 feet of prime waterfront overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and Masonboro Island. The Henry Bacon design masterpiece features solid coquina concrete construction made with local Masonboro oyster shells and topped with a slate roof and octagonal cupola. This is a must see for the connoisseur of classic architecture of historical significance. **Price available upon request**

613 Dundee Drive · Landfall

Located on the tranquil headwaters of Howe Creek, this one of a kind residence features classic design with old world appointments and moldings. The heart and sould of this special home is the 80' x 16' sunroom with a slate terrace. **$1,450,000**

8740 Bald Eagle Lane · Porters Neck

Located on a high bluff overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway, this immaculate 3 bedroom residence has a private pier with a 10,000 lb. lift which offers the perfect, protected spot to keep your boat, fishing equipment and paddelboards. **$1,200,000**

6422 Westport Drive · Shandy

This low country inspired residence is perfectly sited under stately oaks with intracoastal waterway views and a 30' boat slip. Over 6,200 square feet of quality detailing provide a comfortable family home. **$1,395,000**

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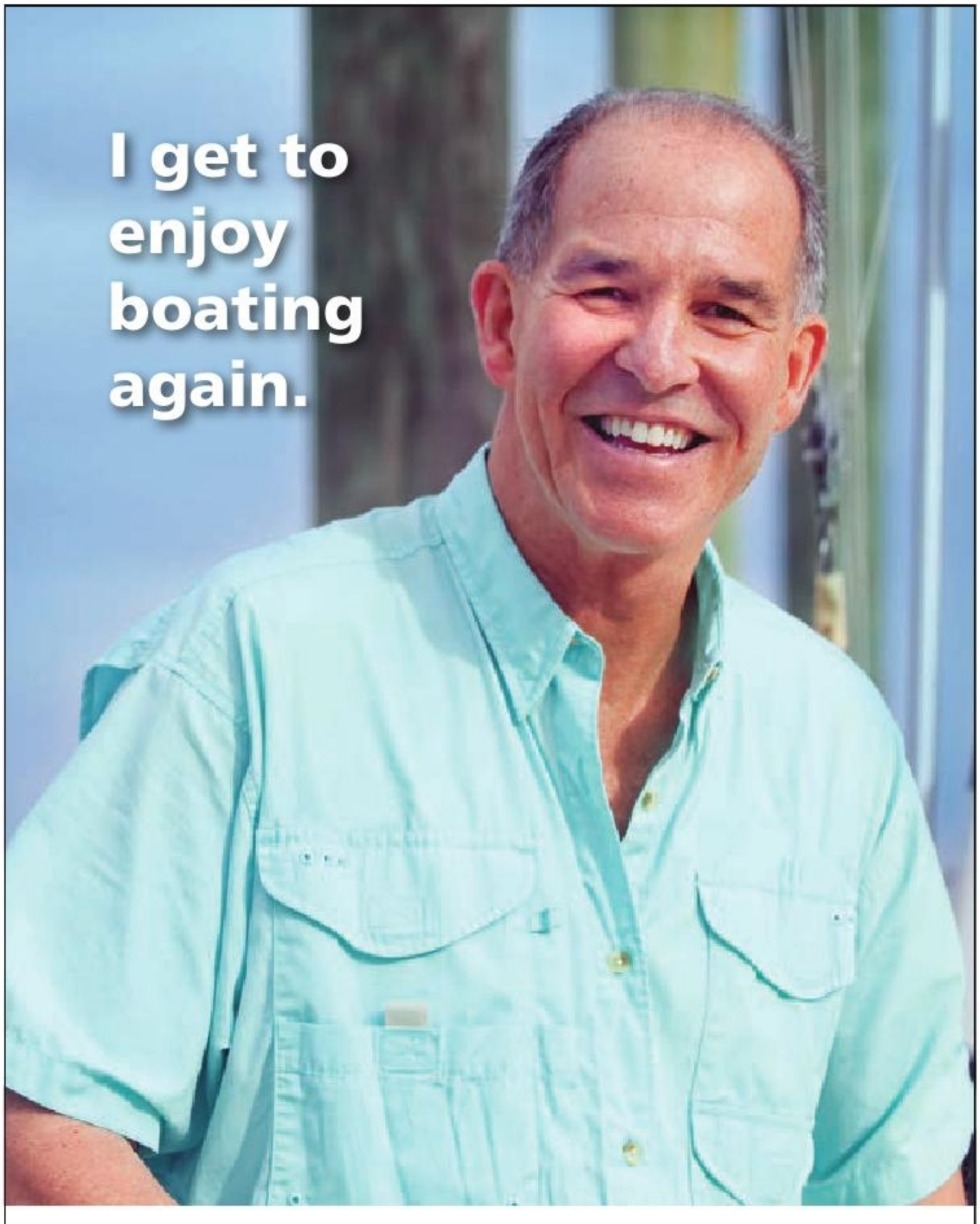

Pounding on the surf in his boat became too risky for Blair when a herniated disc started impinging his spinal cord. Surgery at New Hanover Regional Medical Center relieved the pressure and got him back to chasing fish. www.nhrmc.org

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No. 22

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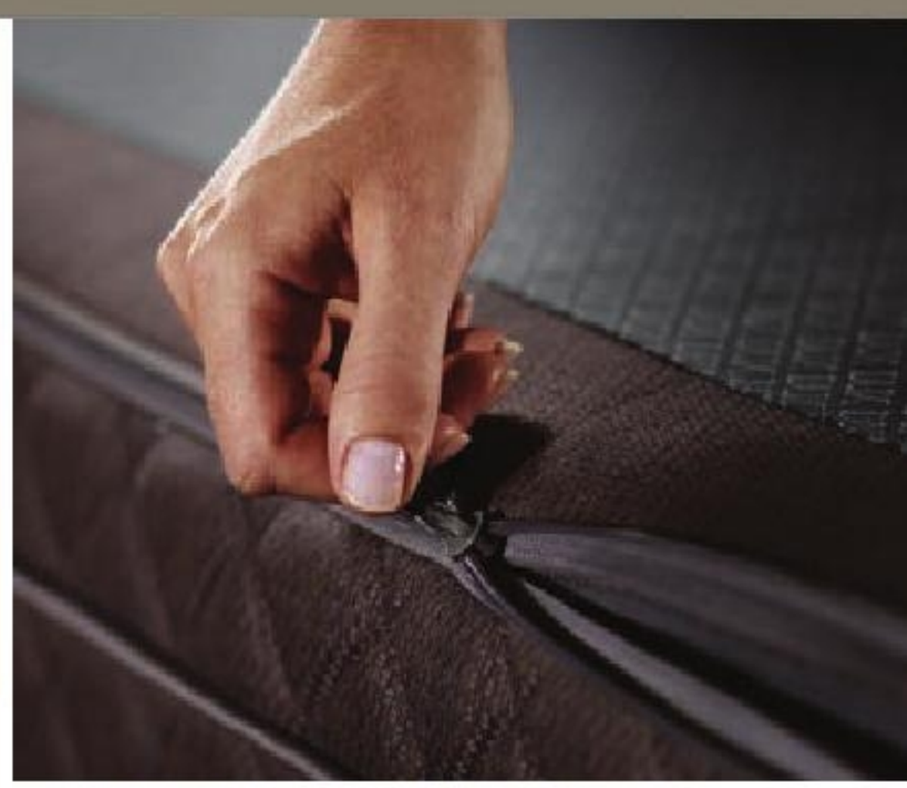

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Life on the Wing

By Jim Dodson

It's funny to think something so simple could give so many years of uncomplicated pleasure.

Then again, maybe that's one of life's truest messages. Simpler is always better.

I'm speaking, of course, of the crumbling bird feeder that graces my backyard garden. It's is a well-loved and well-traveled friend.

My old high school English teacher Miss Emily Dickinson — her real name, by the way, and a red-lipped spinster to boot — would be horrified by such poor usage, firmly noting that it's grammatically impossible to have an inanimate object as a "friend" because friends are living and breathing entities, equally impossible to "love" anything except other human beings, though I'm not sure there were many of those in Miss Emily's grammatically pristine life.

At risk of earning her wrath from beyond the grave, I hereby repeat my oath of love for my aging friend the bird feeder because it is absolutely alive and breathing with birds of all sorts and has been for nearly two decades now, even though it's beginning to fall apart at the seams, not unlike its owner these days.

I bought it on the side of a coast road in Maine one late autumn afternoon not long after my wife and I moved into the post and beam house we built upon a forested hill. This was the year my daughter, Maggie, was born, 1989.

An old man was selling a dozen or so of his homemade birdhouses and feeders from the flat bed of his pickup truck. The houses were beautiful affairs, painted white with elegant gables and fancy copper roofs. The feeders, which came in three sizes, were unpainted models of pure functional simplicity — basic affairs open on all four sides, with ample room for birds to gather beneath a peaked roof.

I bought one of the fancy birdhouses and took it home for my newly laid out "Southern" garden that was protected from the north wind and received the most sun. It looked great standing in the garden, a luxury home for some lucky bird.

Curiously, though, after two weeks not a single bird showed up to claim the house. A month passed and not a single bird even poked its head in to investigate.

By then the weather was closing fast. In Maine, winter hits like the bite of an ax.

I happened to be taking that same coast road when I saw the old man and his pickup truck parked by the side of the road. The fancy copper-roofed birdhouses were all gone. But there were still a few of the large, simple, unpainted feeders left.

Against my better judgment, I pulled over and bought one.

He didn't seem to recognize me, and I didn't bother telling him his fancy birdhouse had no interested takers.

He sold me the feeder for half price.

I took it home and mounted it on a post in the rapidly hardening ground just outside our den window, just as the first snowflakes began to fill the air. I drove to the feed store in town and asked the clerk what seed would work best in my simple open feeder. She told me a 50-pound bag of sunflower seeds. I went home and filled up the feeder.

Early the next morning, there was a foot of snow on the roof of the birdfeeder — and maybe half a dozen black and white chickadees feeding like crazy in the feeder. I remember getting the first cup of coffee and just sitting down in my favorite wing chair to watch them go at it. I was transfixed. The thermometer outside read 12 degrees.

I think I went through two 50-pound bags that winter. No matter the temperature, the chickadees were always there, flitting in, flitting out, remarkable creatures, an ounce of feathers on the wing, ounce for ounce the toughest creature in the Maine woods.

In spring, returning robins showed up at the feeder, followed by noisy jays and even a pesky red squirrel that caused Riley the dog to park himself by the window and growl menacingly at the intruder. To the delight of our infant daughter, who loved to watch the birds along with her old man, a favorite daily excitement was to let Riley out the kitchen door in order to tear around the house and chase off the squirrel, who only once dawdled long enough to nearly get caught.

The lady at the feed store advised me I needed to upgrade to a swanky squirrel-proof feeder with an inverted plexiglass bowl beneath the feeding area and slotted glass vents that regulated the amount of seed consumed, preventing costly spillage. The rig she showed me cost nearly a hundred dollars.

But there was, I confess, something beautiful and primal about the wide-open feathered mayhem that happened at any moment in my wide-open democratic bird feeder. Life in the wilds of Maine — anywhere, really — is a balancing act between here and now, life and death, survival and extinction.

A bird never ponders any of this, of course. Only we devoted bird-watchers marvel at such faith on the wing. Consider the birds of the air, said St. Matthew; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them.

Gorgeous gray and red-striped finches along with handsome yellow-throated evening grosbeaks the size of a lady's evening shoe dropped by to eat their fill, and even a pair of Baltimore orioles visited for a solid week in late Yankee spring. I had a silly mental image in my head of word passing among the birds that an avian soup kitchen had opened up and all were welcome, come as you are. I soon bought a small book to try to identify the many new visitors — grackles, starlings, wrens and waxwings. Barn swallows, towhees and several kinds of sparrow. Once I looked out and saw a magnificent red-tail hawk trying to muscle in on the dining action, too big to shelter under the feeder's roof.

HOMEPLACE

After a long day doing battle with uncooperative words or simply trying to keep up with my young rambunctious family, the parade of birds and constantly changing variety at my feeder were a tonic to the soul, a living metaphor for these transient moments of life — a reminder to pause and take notice of the beauty right before my nose. I often sat with my daughter, and soon her little brother, watching the birds feed and finding a strange and welcome stillness in the end of my day. On the hardest winter days, those dive-bombing chickadees were nothing shy of an inspiration.

When we moved home to North Carolina, I left behind the fancy birdhouse but dug up several of my prize hosta plants and — my very last act before driving away without looking back — took down my democratic bird feeder and placed it in the trunk of my car.

By then it was really showing its age and wear. Before I raised it again by a pair of trained Savannah hollies leaning over our backyard terrace, I replaced rotted pieces of the framing and tacked on a new roof, then gave the whole thing its first coat of paint.

Almost eight years later, that old feeder is busier than ever, a Grand Central Station of Southern feeding birds — robins and Carolina wrens, nuthatches and mourning doves, swifts, fly-catchers, kingbirds, barn swallows and what seems to be a large and ever-expanding clan of cardinals. I've seen one bluebird but maybe a half a dozen pileated woodpeckers. Towhees and juncos are frequent visitors. Seated in my favorite Adirondack chair with a cold Sam Adams and my well-worn bird guide in hand, I've identified everything from Pine siskins and a rare saltmarsh sparrow. One unforgettable evening I stepped out and surprised a dozen beautiful American gold finches perched on the edges, feeding. They flew off like a burst of gold in the still evening air. I even tolerate a pair of pesky gray squirrels who love to sneak along the top of the fence and gorge themselves when they think nobody is watching. My dog Mulligan lives to chase them off, a game she picked up from old Riley, who died a few years ago.

Life hasn't gotten any simpler since I bought my beloved bird feeder by the side of a lonely coastal road. My children have now grown up and flown the coop, and I'm still wrestling with uncooperative words.

Yet the time I spend in my wooden chair just watching birds feed and the seasons come and go is still like a tonic to the soul — somehow feels more important than ever, a simple pleasure that reminds me to keep still and somehow keep the faith. These birds neither reap nor sow nor gather into barns, after all. But as long as this earthbound father is around, they'll be welcome to eat at my old feeder.

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com

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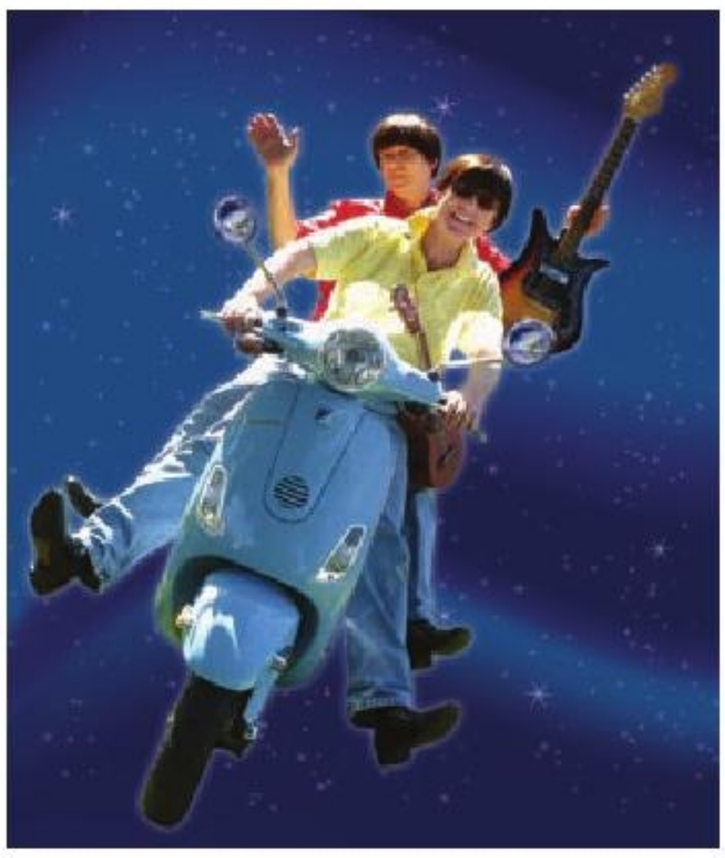
SaltWorks

A Round to Applaud

Monday, April 7, Good Shepherd Center's annual Golf Tournament and Games Day will be held at the Country Club of Landfall's Nicklaus Course. Golf registration begins at 11:30 a.m. (while you're at it, purchase a mulligan and sign up for the putting contest); tournament begins with a shotgun start at 1 p.m. Games (duplicate bridge, party bridge, mahjong and Mexican Train) begin at 12:30 p.m. Golf and games will be followed by a light dinner ($25), golfer awards, special speakers, and a silent auction. Golf Tournament: $200 (includes cart, practice range, gift bag and dinner); $800/foursome. Games Day: $25. Proceeds benefit Good Shepherd Center, the largest provider of services for the homeless and hungry in the tri-county area. Info: (910) 763-4434; www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

Double the Fun



Twin brothers Stede and Monty Del Zorro of Castle Hayne began writing melodies together on flutophones when they were 9 years old. They were 15 when they formed their first pop vocal group, The Illusions, in 1964 (same year as Beatlemania). Now, The Del Zorros are gearing up for their "Summer Fields" tour of New England, which ends with a July performance on the town common in Lynnfield, Massachusetts — a homecoming to celebrate fifty years of musical memories. Their songs, gentle and melodic, call to mind a bygone time. "Our show may best be described as The Everly Brothers, The Beatles, and The Smothers Brothers all rolled into one," say the twins. Be on the lookout for a forthcoming studio EP and live recordings from the tour. For music videos for their newest songs, find The Del Zorros on Facebook. Listen: www.reverbnation.com/delzorros.

Family First

Wilmington pianist Domonique Launey, a regular on the Music at First series, is an audience favorite in the Port City and beyond. On Sunday, April 6, 5 p.m., hear Launey perform with one of her favorites: daughter, Molly Hines. Upon hearing Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony for the first time when she was 5 years old, Hines found an answer to the recurrent question. When I grow up, she would say, I'm going to be a violinist. Now that she's all grown up (she graduates from UNC-Greensboro next month with a degree in violin performance), Hines is a soloist, chamber performer, and concertmaster of the North State Chamber Orchestra. Don't miss the opportunity to see her perform the music of Bach, Beethoven and Sibelius with her proud Mama. First Presbyterian Church, 125 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: www.firstonthird.org.

Encore! Encore (Azaleas)!

Owing to the return of the annual North Carolina Azalea Festival, Southern charm is in full bloom on Wednesday, April 9 through Sunday, April 13. Despite the long, cold winter, the gardens are exquisite (preview a Balinese tropical paradise on pages 64-68, and flip to page 54 for a peek inside the home of Melissa Corbett, whose whimsical Brookwood garden is another stop on the Cape Fear Garden Club's annual tour). Among featured festival events — including circus acts, a celebrity reception, historic home tour, juried art show, and the preeminent Airlie Luncheon Garden Party — find musical performances (country) by Justin Moore, Randy Houser, and Josh Thompson (April 10, 8 p.m.) and two nights of Southern rock from Azalea headliners Widespread Panic (April 11 & 12, 8 p.m.) Concerts take place on the Miller Lite Main Stage, Cape Fear Community College, 411 North Front Street. For more information and complete schedule of events, visit www.ncazaleafestival.org, where you can also download a free festival app for your iPhone or Android. Festival artwork (above) by North Carolina watercolorist William Mangum.

Food on the Fly(trap)

The North Carolina Coastal Land Trust presents the fourth annual Flytrap Frolic from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 26, at Piney Ridge Nature Preserve. Tour the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, embark on a geocaching plant scavenger hunt, and get up close and personal with live snakes from Halyburton Park and the friendly birds of Sea Biscuit Wildlife Shelter. At last year's event, a flytrap was spotted eating a frog. This year: nature's call. Free, environmental event includes educational presentations. Venus flytraps and other carnivorous plants (grown from seed) will be available for $5. Face painting and crafts available for the kids (carnivorous or otherwise). Piney Ridge Nature Preserve, 3800 Canterbury Road, Wilmington (located behind Alderman Elementary School). Info: www.coastallandtrust.org.

Strung Together

What happens when the California Guitar Trio and Montreal Guitar Trio perform together is difficult to put into words. First, there's the seamless fusion of strings: steel (California Trio's) and nylon (Montreal Trio's). Add to that forty years of combined performing experience and a collaborative sound that melds progressive rock with jazz, classical and world music. Truly, you have to experience it for yourself — and now's your chance. The virtuosic profusion is scheduled for Friday, April 4, 8 p.m. Tickets: $18 (gallery); $28–35. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: www.thalianhall.org. Listen: www.cgtrio.com; www.mg3.ca

Lord of the Rings

Finkelstein Music and Jewelry, the only place downtown you can buy a diamond ring and a Turkish hand drum, has been a Front Street fixture for over a century — and now more than ever. Walk by on any given day and you might hear the sounds of guitar, bass or drum lessons reverberating from the in-house studio. Inside, broken strings, woodwinds, keyboards and drums are made good as new. Recently, a customer brought an 1887 mandolin to the shop (now in repair). In addition to hosting a Saturday morning Blues clinic (free and open to the public) held in conjunction with the annual Cape Fear Blues Festival in July, Finkelstein is teaming up with Martin Guitars for a Martin clinic and local legend Jerome Teasley for an upcoming drum clinic. Find Finkelstein on Facebook for details on upcoming events. Info: www.finkelsteins.com.

Where Are They Now?

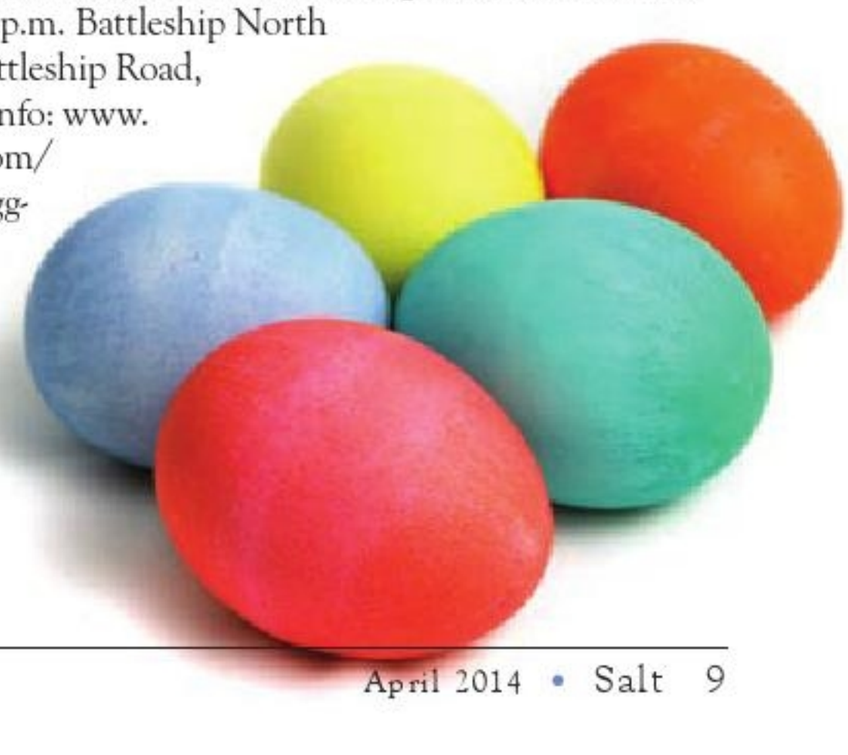
Year before last, Bag of Toys opened for national headliner O.A.R. They've shared the stage with Fishbone, Pato Banton, Mike Pinto, The Expendables and Sean Kingston. Still, its been a while since Port City fans have heard these laid-back acoustic rockers at favorite local haunts. Could have something to do with the fact that they're all settling down and starting families — adding a comic yet literal twist to their band name. Stay tuned, they say. Between naps and diaper changes, their fourth studio album is in the works. "We're still toying with the new album title," says lead vocalist Robert Tait. "It's hard to know when to finish an album, but we're very close." Check out www.bagoftoysmusic.com or www.facebook.com/bagoftoys for updates on their forthcoming album release.

Soul Music

Poetry is the music of the soul, said Voltaire. We say he's right. Since April is National Poetry Month, consider celebrating April 5–6 (ponder: Are two days called a couplet if joined by rhyme?) with the poets of Durham's Bull City Press and faculty from Cape Fear Community College at the Days of Poetry Festival at Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Bring your lyrical friends and neighbors and a poem of your own for the open mic. For complete schedule and more information, call (910) 762-6657. And don't forget national Poem in Your Pocket Day on Thursday, April 24. Pick a poem, carry it with you, and share it with others throughout the day. To share verse via Twitter: #pocketpoem.

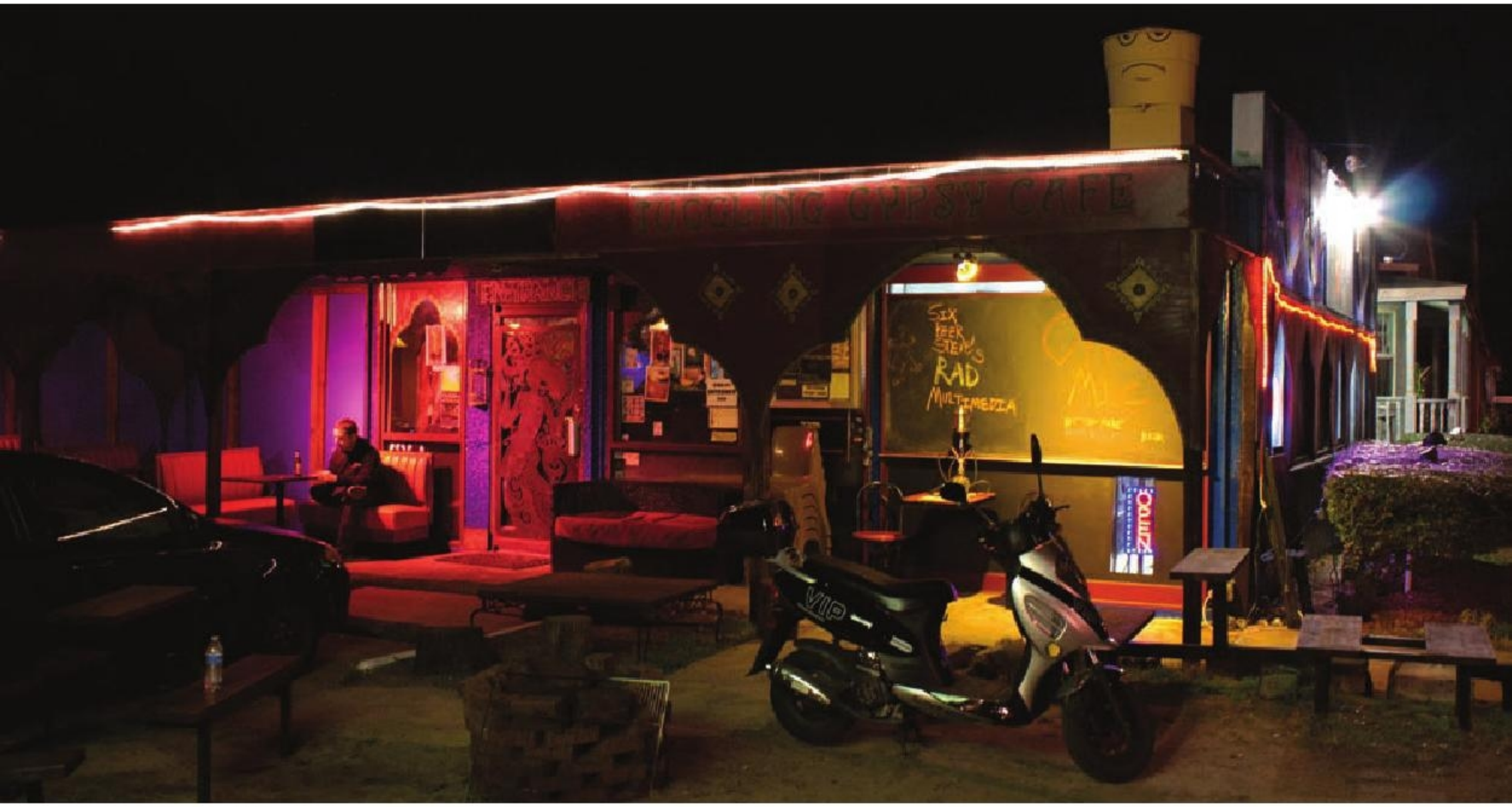
Egg Scramble

Lord willing and the river don't rise, the Battleship Easter Egg Hunt Carnival happens Good Friday, April 18, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Continuous games and egg hunts throughout the day. Bring a camera for "selfies" with Buddy (the Battleship Bunny). Admission: $5; free for children age 2 and under. Last ticket sold at 1 p.m. Battleship North Carolina, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: www.battleshipnc.com/events/easteregg-huntcarnival.



Port City Sideshow

On Monday night, at the Juggling Gypsy, anything goes. Sort of



By Ashley Wahl

We came for the carnival. We came for the fire breathers and the bearded ladies and the delightfully obscure. Alas, we came too early.

Monday nights, open mic at the Juggling Gypsy, anything goes. But the carnival is not here yet. At 8 p.m., a man in a tweed flat cap is sitting at the bar nursing a pint of Guinness and telling bartender/hookah aficionado Brian Campbell why Scottish bard Robbie Burns is "more pure than Yeats."

Brian disagrees.

"His public persona was as BS as Whitman's."

"He was a farmer!" Craig Thompson yells back.

This sets Brian off on a rant. As the fair trade coffee brews, the bar becomes a poets' forum. We are not shouting, Brian assures. "We're just naturally loud."

Although Craig plays fiddle in a Celtic trio born out of a bluegrass band, he isn't here for the open mic. According to Brian, The Blarney Brogues play everywhere else.

"You don't give us free beer!" Craig replies.

***

The stage of this fringe entertainment parlor is still empty. As booths and chairs are claimed by tattooed ladies and somber musicians, clouds of lemon and jasmine smoke coalesce and disappear.

Beer bottles wear stylish knit cozies made in Wilmington. Hipsters wearing stylish knit caps bring their own Freakers.

One tattooed/tattooer lady is here to meet a friend's new boyfriend. "He will be judged," says Brittanie.

***

Our host calls himself Six-Beer-Steve. It's nearly 10 p.m. when he welcomes the crowd, introduces "magic mic" (you never know what you're going to get), and announces tonight's two-word theme: wild animals.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIN PIKE

A spectator meows.

Before participants take the stage, Steve shares a story about the time a rabid raccoon came to die in the playhouse in the backyard of his childhood.

"Dad calls my Godfather, Uncle Rob, who shows up in full [cop] uniform," says Steve. Uncle Rob shoots the critter in the middle of the playhouse kitchen. Steve watches as the playhouse is burned to the ground.

You never know what you're going to get.

***

Jon Ripley takes the mic and embraces awkward silences. He talks of stalking hens and eagles and, somehow, ends on someone else's joke.

***

A black comedian says he was a latchkey kid then asks, "Anybody got two dads?"

He's comfortable onstage with his PBR tallboy, feeding off the energy of the crowd.

"When I was a kid, test tube babies were real. Now they're all grown up." He paints a scenario in which the young adult brings his/her new boyfriend home to meet the fathers. The punchline is brilliant.

"We're not really into interracial dating."

He takes a seat beside his white girlfriend.

***

Cameron "Camboi" Smith wears sunglasses while he parodies a rap song with a beat based on a sample from a 1959 Italian pop song.

Six-Beer-Steve calls Camboi a modern poet, reminds us that the Juggling Gypsy is a "judgment-free zone."

***

The carnival is not here yet. Gypsy-goers order $2 microbrews and marvel at the cafe menu, aka, the Grilled Cheese Empire. Brian recommends potato bread and provolone. He now sits at the bar with his after-shift hookah. The night owls begin to arrive.

A man wearing a black porkpie hat stands silent by the bar. He looks like poet. Or an avant-garde performance artist. If he's a fire breather, some of us may never know.

Not all wild animals are nocturnal.

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

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Queen of the Keyboard

Live from City Stage, It's Chiaki Ito

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Plain and simple: Theatergoers in Wilmington are spoiled. We've got top quality performances, beautiful choreography, and wonderful historic venues — from the antebellum Thalian Hall to City Stage, the lovely gem of the early teens tucked away on the fifth floor of the Masonic Temple Building on North Front Street. Most of all, though, local audiences are spoiled for a reason they take for granted: real musicians who play live music for musical theater productions. Often the experience is so seamless that we fail to remark upon it. But live music is incredible to behold, and, believe it or not, not the norm in community theater across the country. Here, Opera House, Thalian Association and City Stage regularly use live bands. City Stage music director/producer Chiaki Ito says the music creates the energy of the show.

Much like music is the through-line for a musical theater show, for Chiaki Ito, it has been the constant in her incredibly varied and changing life. If you've been to a City Stage musical in the past ten years, by the way, Ito is the stunning Japanese woman rockin' the keyboards with the band. Yes, she's the one in the pigtails and miniskirt.

Born in Tokyo, Ito and her family moved to Philadelphia when she was 5 years old. "They put me in special ed because I couldn't speak English," Ito remembers. She turned to music. In fourth grade, Ito experienced her first breakthrough when she was asked to accompany the chorus on piano for the holiday concert. Life was starting to find a course, and then the family moved to Sampson County, North Carolina. Culture shock doesn't begin to cover it. But again, there was a musical upside. "When we did *South Pacific*, I was the only one they could cast as Bloody Mary," Ito jokes. By senior year, she engineered an escape to the North Carolina School of the Arts to study classical music.

After getting her undergrad degree in communication studies from UNC-Chapel Hill, Ito lived in Tokyo for a brief stint and discovered that things weren't quite what she expected. "Tokyo was interesting because I looked Japanese and people expected me to be Japanese . . . but I really

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

wasn't Japanese." She pauses and looks down at her dog, a Jack Russell terrier named Elvis, then goes on to explain how she wound up counseling high school students and pursuing her law degree in Guam, where she eventually performed with the Guam Symphony. Several young women came to counseling because of incest, Ito explains. "As a counselor all you can do is hold their hand and report it to Social Services. I wanted to prosecute."

After receiving her law degree from the University of South Carolina, Ito relocated to Wilmington in the late '90s at a time when the theater scene was mushrooming. "I ran into the arts center one night and announced I wanted to play keyboards!" she laughs. The show was *A Chorus Line*. Judy Greenhut was directing. Over eighty shows later, Ito's still playing. But in the mid-2000s she moved up from playing in the pit orchestra to serving as musical director. This past New Year's, Greenhut directed *Cabaret* with Ito as keyboardist and music director.

What does a music director actually do? It starts with auditioning singers. "You have to make sure they can sing their parts . . . most people don't read music," Ito confesses. "Then you have to get the band together, find people to play in the band, hold band rehearsal, be at rehearsal every night." But the piece that many people miss is the underscoring: "You have to feel how the music fits into the show," Ito explains. "There are scenes going on, and you have to use music underscoring to emphasize specific dramatic moments that are happening, and sneak in and sneak out unnoticed to enhance the emotional experience."

All of that is dependent on developing sight reading and sight singing skills: the ability to look at a piece of music and read it like a book. To hear Ito explain this phenomenon is dizzying for music-reading amateurs. She thinks back to a class at NC School of the Arts. "The teacher would give us open score Bach chorale, four parts — soprano, alto, tenor, base. Each line is written on a separate staff. Each clef, the "C," is in a different place. So then you have to read all of it together and play it on the piano. She would say, 'Solfege the tenor clef!' So you are reading this open score Bach chorale and she's making you pull out one line – and sing a different line . . . that's really good training for a music director." Ito pauses for emphasis. "That's hard . . . That's a skill that I think music directors should have: to play and sing any line at any given time while listening to the rest of the chaos happening around you."

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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One Thing Too Many

A short story collection that's not short enough

By Stephen E. Smith

I didn't watch the sitcom *The Office* more than a couple of times — not because I'm too sophisticated for TV humor but because Steve Carell played such a convincing jerk that I found his character insufferable. I did, however, take notice of a couple of the more likable characters — Pam, Jim and Kevin, in particular, and Ryan, a dark-haired corporate climber whose face appeared to be composed of mismatched parts. When I happened upon that very face staring at me from the dust jacket of a book of short stories, I thought: Oh, no, fiction by an actor who's convinced that everything he does is worthy of notice. Spare me.

I should have trusted my instincts. B.J. Novak's first story collection, *One More Thing*, is worth reading if you're a lover of cynical, quasi-intellectual short-short stories — many of them no more than anecdotes — and you're amused by dark, quirky, nonsensical humor. The actor turned author is certainly capable of weaving a mildly humorous narrative that takes the reader in unanticipated directions, but he has only a modest talent for observing the world through a skewed lens. The best of his stories have little to say.

So how funny is *One More Thing*? Funny enough to maintain a steady level of bemusement punctuated by the occasional chuckle. The story "A Good Problem to Have" is typical. An old man who claims to have invented the algebraic word problem — "A man leaves Chicago at 12 p.m. on a train heading for Cleveland at sixty miles per hour" — barges into a classroom full of precocious fourth-graders to claim credit for his achievement. He rambles on and on in a schizoid frenzy about how he wasn't paid enough for his mathematical creation. When the child narrator asks if the man could produce the stationery on which the problem was written, the old man claims that he kept the original copy in a shoebox. "'You know, I did go through the box once. And it was there. But I didn't look very carefully, though. I didn't even really look at all. Just put my hand in there and took it out. That's not really looking . . . But I'm not looking again. But maybe it's there. You know, maybe I'll look again. That's not a bad idea.'"

The teacher points out how much good the word problem has done for children and receives a puzzling response. "'It is . . . I guess what you said before, it is nice seeing that you all know it,' said the old man. 'It's a reward. Not the only reward, but . . . you take what you can get. I'll try to get more, but you take what you can get. It's done so much good for the world that I do feel like I deserve more. But, yeah, that's a good thing.'" When the old man leaves the classroom, a student asks, "What the hell does that mean?" and the teacher replies, "*Language*." Incoherence probably makes sense in a universe where there's no rationality, where the only thing that makes sense is that nothing does, which is a little too easy and at best tenuous a theme.

Many of the stories purposely turn on paradox and narrative reversals, and are written using contemporary language patterns and hip expressions that might be found in the *Urban Dictionary*. The text is filled with allusions to celebrities past and present — Elvis Presley, Johnny Depp, JFK, Dan

Fogelberg, John Grisham and, of course, Justin Bieber — which vaguely grounds the reader in what would otherwise be an unknown time and place. All of this disorganized free writing and overt name dropping might come across as a form of Dadaism if the stories didn't present themselves as allegoric. The characters are flat and settings and timeframes are purposely vague, leading one to believe that a message is the primary purpose of the story. That might be the case if Novak played it straight, but the stories always include a touch of social satire and a dose of humor, which negate any serious resolution. And of course there's nothing new here. Parables and fables abound in Western literature, and readers will be reminded of humorous allegorical fiction by James Thurber, Joseph Heller, Donald Barthelme and Richard Brautigan rather than the straight-ahead parables of Franz Kafka, George Garrett and Jorge Luis Borges.

Most of the stories are blessedly succinct, ranging in length from nine words to as many as twenty pages. In the case of "Kindness Among Cakes" there are only two short sentences:

CHILD: "Why does carrot cake have the best icing?"

MOTHER: "Because it needs the best icing."

If those lines fall with a predictable thud, the story "Romance, Chapter One" works on a simplistic level:

"The cute one?"

"No, the other one."

"Oh, she's cute too."

Clever though these short-short stories may be, there's little thematic resonance and no memorable passages, and the longer, more developed tales tend to dissolve into shaggy dog stories.

Novak is a TV star, and *One More Thing* has attracted attention because of his celebrity status. In "Confucius at Home," he touches on that very dilemma. The illustrious Chinese sage asks one of his servants if there are any noodles around. "CONFUCIUS SAY: BRING NOODLES!" shouts the servant to the cook. When Confucius tells everyone to settle down, that he's just asking a question and his words don't constitute a momentous pronouncement, the servant says, "CONFUCIUS SAY: CALM DOWN!" Finally, Confucius tells the other members of the household, "Stop it, okay? Not everything is a *thing*." Which, of course, is also taken as a wise pronouncement. The story concludes with the line: "But if the scribe wanted to write those other two down . . . well, Confucius wasn't going to stop him."

That's the message.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*

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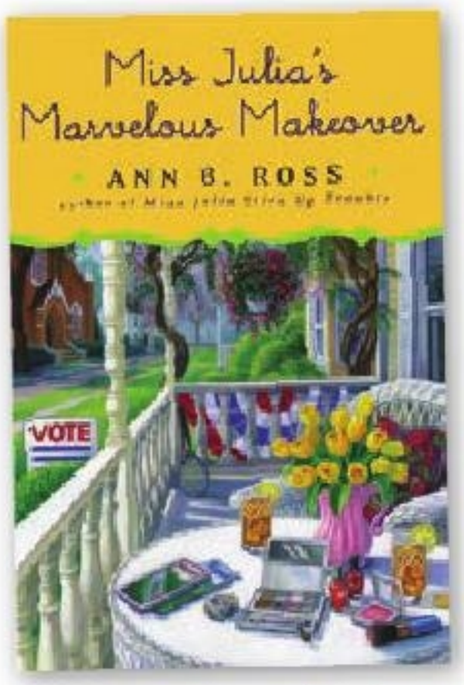
N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

Readings and Such

Reading can take you anywhere. Hop on for the ride.

April 3–6 (Thursday–Sunday). Mark your calendar for the North Carolina Literary Festival 2014, The Future of Reading, James B. Hunt Jr. Library, N.C. State University, Raleigh. "Reading is, in fact, on the upswing," the organizers of this free event proclaim. Look for: Readings/discussions; performances; book signings; children's activities; and book sales. For complete information: www.lib.ncsu.edu/literaryfestival.



April 8 (Thursday, 5 p.m.), The Fountainhead Bookstore, Hendersonville. Launch of *Miss Julia's Marvelous Makeover*, the thirteenth of Ann B. Ross's popular series. Fans will giggle once they discover what the crafty protagonist is up to this time. A small clue: After her husband runs for N.C. State Senate and has a gallbladder attack, Miss Julia replaces him on the campaign trail. The curious are invited to ask best-selling author Ross all they ever wanted to know about Miss Julia and her shenanigans. April North Carolina bookstore stops include Books-A-Million, Gastonia; Barnes & Noble, Greensboro; Quail Ridge Books, Raleigh; and Fireside Books & Gifts, Shelby: www.missjulia.com.

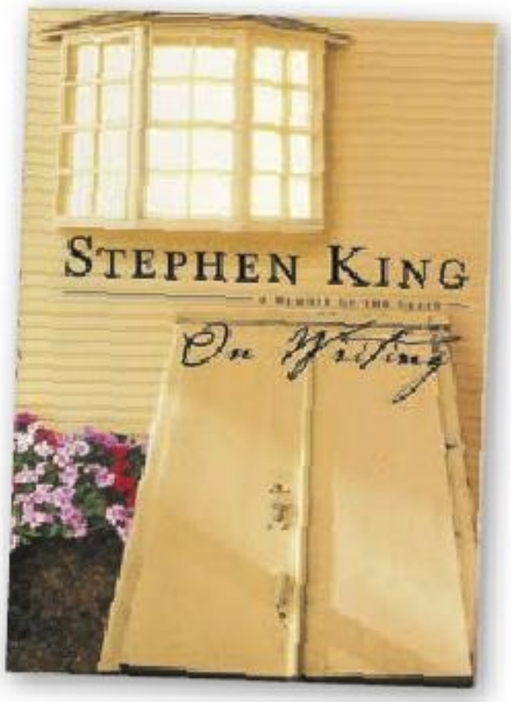
April 13 (Sunday, 2–4 p.m.). Mystery Writers Appreciation Day! High Point Library, 901 North Main Street, High Point. Win free mystery books, snack on cookies, and chat informally with mystery authors and publishing professionals. www.highpointpubliclibrary.com.

Choose an author as you choose a friend — Sir Christopher Wren

True Mystery

More mysteries are written in our state than any other genre. The best ones contain much more than gory slayings. Jeffrey Deaver, Chapel Hill suspense writer, says, "My books are primarily plot driven, but the best plot in the world is useless if you don't populate it with characters readers can care about." Margaret Maron demonstrates how much a well-written who-done-it can accomplish. Her protagonist, District Court Judge Deborah Knott, uncovers murder in every corner of the state. Maron's prize-winning prose also educates us on local "problems of race, migrant labor, politics and unstructured growth." On April 17, Maron will speak about her books and writing career at Kinston-Lenoir Public Library in Kinston. www.neuselibrary.org.

Revision is the heart of writing — Patricia Reilly Giff



Recently Stephen King spent time in the eastern part of N.C. producing a TV serial. In his book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, he cautions writers of all genres: "Kill your darlings, kill your darlings, even when it breaks your egocentric little scribbler's heart." Well, my dears, he doesn't mean you should strangle your cute protagonists. Oh, no, his warning cautions writers to STRIKE OUT EVERY UNNECESSARY WORD. If you can't stomach surgery, seek help.

In this month's "Words of Wisdom," Elizabeth Hudson, editor in chief of *Our State* magazine, describes how valuable an editor can be:

In the movie *Almost Famous*, a senior editor at *Rolling Stone* calls up a journalist and says, "This is your editor; how's the story?"

"Your" editor. I like that, the possessive pronoun. I like it, because writing is a solitary pursuit, a lonely pursuit, and if there is anything a writer needs, it's someone to partner up with, someone to claim as his own, a compatriot and a conscience, a muse and a motivator. Writing itself is the ultimate act of ownership — you own those words you put onto paper, you possess them, you hold them tight to your chest and they belong to you and no one else; sometimes they even possess you, and sometimes it's not so easy to let them go. An editor — your editor — is the transition between you, the writer, and the rest of the world. He is the person who can help you let go, the one who can release your words and set them free.

April 12 (Saturday) attend the North Carolina Writers' Network Spring Conference in the MHRA Building on the campus of UNCG. A great opportunity to learn about writing and publishing, pitch your manuscript and read your work during an open-mic session. www.ncwriters.org.

Keep writing; keep loving to write!

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in the 18th century Quaker community of Deep River.*

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Best Reader Memoirs 2014

The Kamishibai Man

By Mebane Boyd

Way, way back in 1965, when I was four years old, my family moved from southeastern North Carolina to Kobe, Japan. We were beginning our nine-year adventure as a missionary family.

Our first house was a Western-style home in a compound with other missionaries. There was a lush, grassy yard and a swing set — a tremendous luxury in our neighborhood.

The best thing about our house was that it came with Asako-san. She stood four-and-a-half-feet tall, and had thick, shoulder-length black hair that spread from her head to her shoulders like a triangle. Most days she arrived wearing a navy or black dress with white socks and plain, sensible shoes. She wore wire-rimmed glasses and had a big, wide, contagious smile that she didn't try to hide with her cupped hand like the other Japanese ladies.

My parents' first job was to learn Japanese, so they attended language school every morning. They struggled with the challenging language each day, slowly conquering things like the seven verbs for "to wear," depending on what you were putting on. There were new things to see and do around every corner, and Mom and Dad expectantly left the house daily on foot, their eyes open wide, marveling at all they encountered.

While they attended school, Asako-san cooked and cleaned, and took David and me up, down, and all over the hilly neighborhoods of Kobe. David was still small enough to "onbu," to be carried on Asako-san's back. When in a hurry to go somewhere or to race home, she squatted down low to the ground and let David climb on, wrapping his chubby arms around her neck and breathing in the faint scent of soap and green tea.

She took us to the zoo where droves of children put their arms around us, the strange foreigners, posing for pictures at scenic spots. She bought us treats and put ten yen copper coins in tiny rides that played sweet music. She took us to the playground where crowds of children pointed and watched as two blue-eyed, brown-haired children climbed metal structures, swung on the swing set, and played in the dirt. It was here, in the late afternoons, that the *kamishibai* man would appear.

The first time we saw him, David and I were lined up like little ducklings on the steps to the top of the slide, one child per step, patiently waiting our turn. Asako-san, standing on the ground below, called up to us, "Mebane-chan! David-chan! *Hora, hora*!" Look, look!

An unshaven man wearing blue patterned bloomer pants was pedaling his rickety bicycle into the middle of the playground pulling a worn, wooden box behind him. He got off, kicked up the kickstand with a squeak, and clapped two wood blocks together to make a high-pitched sound, demanding the attention of all the children who hadn't already noticed him. Children came running from every corner of the playground. Those of us on the slide slid down practically on top of each other, and the children on the wooden swings stopped abruptly, dragging their feet along the ground and churning up dusty brown clouds.

As we gathered around, the *kamishibai* man opened the hinged doors of his box like butterfly wings, transforming it into a theater. On the side was a drawer filled with hand-drawn stories. Asako-san gently nudged us to sit on the ground in front of him. We fed on her enthusiasm and broad smile, waiting for what might happen next.

The children's excited giggles and chatter stopped the instant the man stood at the side of the frame. Then, using paper story boards that he slid in and out of the box, he dramatically told the conclusion of a story about *Urutora-Man* (Ultra-Man), who saved the people from the bad lizard monster destroying the city. He changed his voice for each character, yelling and making us jump, sometimes whispering, making us lean in to hear better, and wiggling his hairy eye brows to make us laugh. Following the lead of the other children, we clapped and cheered for *Urutora-Man*, whose powers could seemingly destroy all evil. We understood very little Japanese then, but with the pictures, animated voices and the reactions of the others, we knew exactly what was happening.

He then began another tale, a folk story about Momotaro. Found as a baby inside a giant peach by a poor elderly couple, Momotaro goes to seek his fortune along with a dog, a monkey and a pheasant. They encounter trouble on an island full of *oni* (two-horned monsters with menacing eyes). Just when the *oni* were about to strike Momotaro and we feared for his very life, the *kamishibai* man abruptly stopped the story and, to our disappointment, slid a page into the frame that said, "*Tsudzuku*," to be continued. He promised to come back the next afternoon to finish the story. There was no convincing him to continue, even if we could have asked him in the most polite Japanese.

Asako-san then bought us each a *mizuame* from him, the stickiest of candy in bright, jewel-like colors of red, green and yellow, stuck on a wooden chopstick. I found out, years later, *mizuame* can pull out a molar with a "pop!" if you aren't careful.

I bit down on the gooey deliciousness, regretting it because I had to stick my dusty hand in my mouth to pull the candy off my teeth. David clamped his teeth down on the candy too, and pulled the chopstick away from his mouth. Stretching it as far as his arm could reach, he made a droopy, dirty rainbow that stuck all over his clothes.

It was OK. Asako-san could fix that.

We watched the *kamishibai* man pack up his wares and ride off squeaking beyond the stone wall to the next playground. Gripping Asako-san's hands with our sticky fingers, we walked home wondering what was going to happen to Momotaro.

Wilmington native Mebane Boyd grew up reading and listening to stories in both English and Japanese. She now spends her days helping new mothers discover the joys of reading to their babies and toddlers.

Road Music

Laugh if you wish, but that's me breezing along the Breeze Radio

By Ann Ipock

Music is not competition
Music is not repetition
Music is love, love for the masses,
Love for all classes . . .

– Michael Franti and Spearhead, "Everybody Ona Move"

I often say God played a trick on me when I was born. People tell me I can dance (just watch me do the camel walk), but I absolutely *cannot* sing. And I do love music. Repeat: *love*. Music is to my soul as air is to my lungs.

In fact, as I often do, I'm listening to music – Michael Franti and Spearhead – as I write this column. Like most of Franti's songs, this one, "Everybody Ona Move," reminds me of the kind of music you'd expect to hear while drinking rum cocktails on a Caribbean cruise. I also like that he tackles social issues. And who doesn't love music where children sing along?

But there's a problem (besides the fact that I sound like a cat in heat when I try to sing along). It's the receiving/delivery of the music. Understand that "tech-savvy" is not a phrase that has ever been uttered in my general direction. *Now* understand why I think the speakers in my car, a 2006 Toyota Avalon, are as incredible as the acoustics inside the Lincoln Center. And not only can I play CDs inside my car; I can play cassette tapes too. Don't laugh. When we lived in Pawleys Island, I recorded Breeze Radio's "Beach Music" program with DJs Leo and Woody on tapes. I often called in, requesting songs (you can hear my hick-from-the-sticks voice on some recordings). Yes, it's old school, but it works. And I'll bet some people wish they had my collection.

I have this theory that people with surplus rhythm – 'cause there's varying degrees – were born with a gene that pumps extra serotonin to the brain, making them happier people. Which is one reason, I think, why I love to go to weddings. I love seeing the bridal party all dressed up, I tear up during the vows, and I do enjoy the bridal music. And, *Baby*, I'm sitting on pins and needles, waiting for the reception. That's when I know I'll get to dance, cut a rug, act the fool and just basically get crazy!

But back to my musical hardship. I have a boom box in my bathroom that requires me to stretch the cord over my sink to plug it in. The CD player works off and on – mostly off – so, I try the radio. Nothing but static. The music report: aggravating with a slight chance of electrocution. I once asked my buddy DJ Kim Czornij from Penguin Radio (my fave), when we were having coffee, how to get better reception. I expected some long, drawn-out engineering plan. Instead she said, "Gee, Ann, I don't know."

So, I often use my laptop to listen to music. Here's "Country Music Disco 45" by Jeb Loy Nichols and it's *smooooth*. (I first heard it when Kim played it.) Next comes Mavis Staples, singing, "You're Not Alone" – very uplifting. See, I like my music eclectic, which is sort of how I live my life. My furniture is that way. My writing is that way. My brain is *definitely* wired that way. "Beautiful People" by Superheavy follows. But listening this way is a real pain: First I go to Google, then click "Favorites," then the YouTube video.

I used to speed-walk plugged in to my Walkman. I've never owned an iPod or an MP3 player. On my last attempt to improve the quality of my musical intake, though, I bought small, expensive Bose speakers hoping to hook them up to my Crosley CD-tape-turntable player. It didn't work, so I hooked them up to my laptop. But the laptop is cumbersome, the battery doesn't last very long, and again, I *can't* have it around water.

I sometimes wonder if music isn't a drug – a good drug, of course. "Music speaks to me like no human ever can," someone once said. For the life of me I can't locate the origin of that quote, but I wrote it in calligraphy and placed it on my desk. Oftentimes I pick music to match my mood. Usually it's happy music; but some days call for Alessandra Marcello's "Oboe Concerto in D Minor."

Boom box? Laptop? Crosley? Nah. Guess I'm going to have to start living in my car to listen to great music. Just me and Kim, riding along together.

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*

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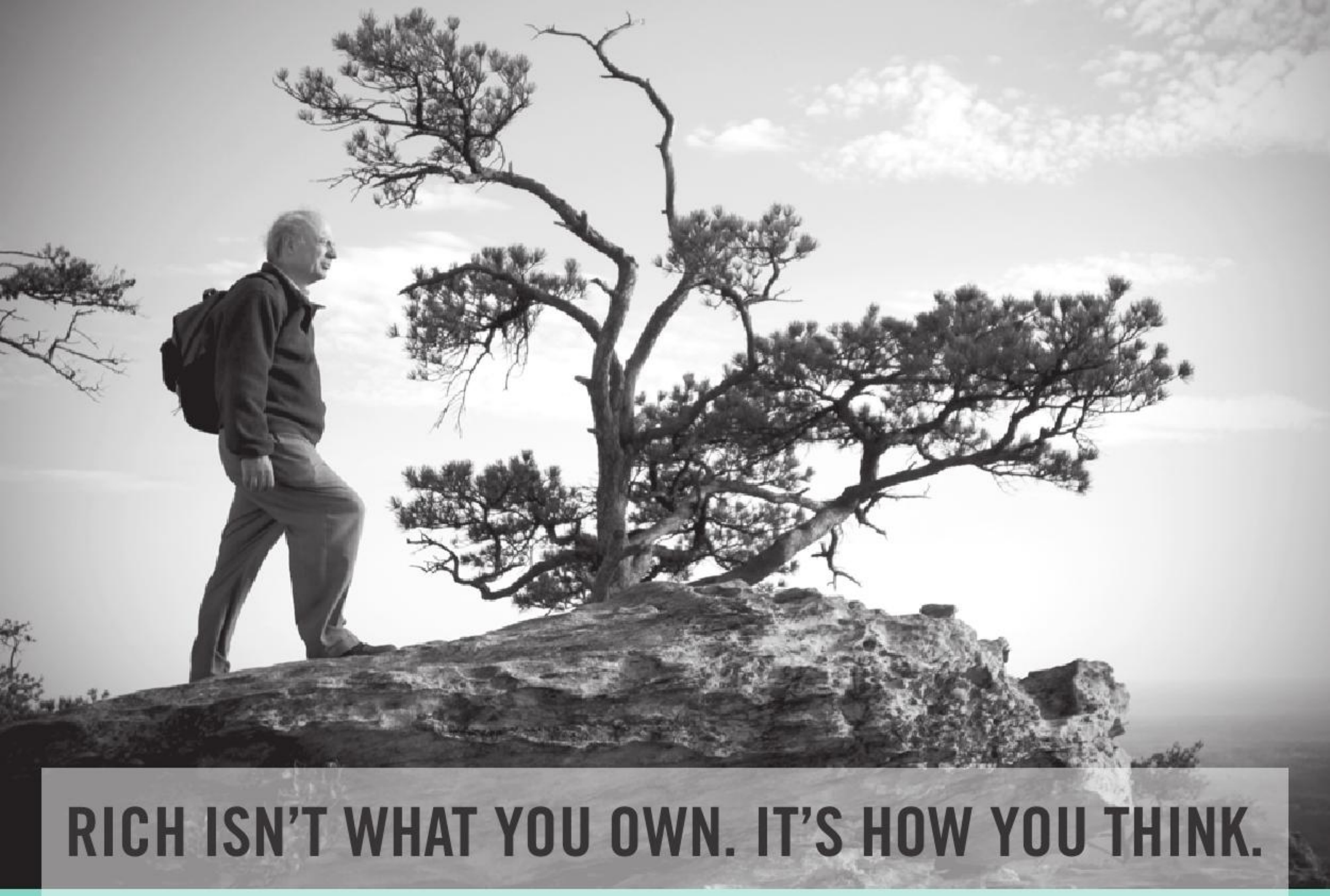

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Confession of a Human Azalea

Queen Esther, Andy and me, and quite the bloomin' weekend

John Bromfield, Esther Williams, and Andy Griffith at the 1958 coronation. Though Griffith's career hadn't yet "moved" to Mayberry, he had already made a name for himself in N. C. His good friend Hugh Morton encouraged him to take part in the festival. (Photo by Hugh Morton, Cape Fear Museum)

By Nan Graham

Nowadays, the reigning queen of the North Carolina Azalea Festival is likely to be the star of a daytime or nighttime soap opera. The Queen's Court is made up of local beauty queens from the vicinity.

But in April 1958, Wilmington's annual spring Azalea Festival was somewhat different. The queen was a film actress and the beauty court was made up of North Carolina May Queens. The Azalea Queen XI that year was glamorous movie star Esther Williams. The wholesomely beautiful swimmer-movie star-athlete was at the top of her game with a string of Technicolor extravaganzas under her latex — a box office sensation from 1949–1956.

What an image: that Amazonian height, those dazzling teeth, the perfect flower-entwined braided hair, which, according to *Photoplay* magazine, was immobilized with a mixture of baby oil and Vaseline. And those breathtaking dives from 40-foot towers into lighted circles of orchids and swimmers, orchestrated by the legendary Busby Berkeley. You only need to have seen one of the dozen or so waterlogged movies starring Williams to retrieve images of this stunning woman. (*Neptune's Daughter* and *Jupiter's Darling* are personal favorites.) Most teenage girls growing up at the time had practiced her famous backstroke and dazzling Ipana smile each summer at local swimming pools.

In the fifties, Queen Azalea's court included fourteen May Queens from college campuses all over North Carolina: Duke, Salem, Meredith, Wake Forest, Queens, St. Mary's. *Everybody* had a May Queen . . . except one university.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had no such queen. But they did have a "Beat Dook" Queen, chosen to reign over the uber-competitive Carolina-Duke parade and football game every fall. Yes, there was such a title. And it was mine. So I was delegated as the default UNC representative and sent to hobnob with celebrities on my first visit to Wilmington.

Each girl in the court was assigned a specific azalea color for her strapless net gown and matching parasol. The material for the dresses was ordered from New York City and custom-dyed to match the flowers. Actual azaleas were packed in Spanish moss and shipped to Manhattan for an exact azalea color match. The results were striking. Billowing net dresses (complete with crinoline underskirts) of pale pink, vermilion, rose, lavender and purple were a knockout when the court clustered around Esther at the lawn parties for "photo ops." Of course, that phrase did not exist in 1958. Rolling down Third Street on the court's float through downtown Wilmington, we were a mass of human azaleas.

It's a good thing the human azaleas were there; the real azaleas were conspicuously absent. A cold snap had postponed their appearance at their own festival. Carolina Finley, May Queen from Greensboro College, recalls that scores of potted hothouse azaleas were lugged in at every event as stand-ins for the real McCoy.

My designated azalea color was "Formosa," that deep fuchsia hue so prevalent in low country gardens. My dress and parasol were a perfect match to the real flower, but the color proved difficult to wear. The "Formosa" colored outfit turned my complexion a sallow, jaundiced shade, providing a startling color contrast. I was a bit peeved that Duke's May Queen, Elizabeth Hanford (later to be nationally known as Elizabeth "Liddy" Dole), was assigned the more flattering rosy hue, the "Pride of Mobile" azalea. I secretly wondered if some malevolent Duke festival official had had a hand in assigning the color choices.

Other celebrity guests included the hunky John Bromfield (known mainly from the Western TV series *Sheriff of Cochise*) and tough guy Scott Brady. Brady played the villain in numerous movies; he even had a fistfight scene with Clint Eastwood in the 1958 film *Ambush at Cimarron Pass* – the first and last time Eastwood was ever bested! (Eastwood famously said, "It was probably the worst

PHOTOS BY HUGH MORTON. (UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL, NC COLLECTION)
FROM THE CAPE FEAR GARDEN CLUB BOOK, BELLES AND BLOOMS, BY SUSAN TAYLOR BLOCK

Western ever made.") Turns out that Brady really was a scoundrel, despite his ironic billing as the "King of Hospitality" in the Azalea Festival souvenir programs and all publicity. When his feud (causes unknown) with Queen Esther exploded, the "King of Hospitality" hastily departed Wilmington in a huff . . . mid-festival. Note: Mr. Brady was the last ever "King of Hospitality." The position was eliminated the very next year.

One young actor, Andy Griffith, had recently made quite a name for himself with his hit recording of his comedy monologue, "What It Was, Was Football," a country preacher's wacky tale of attending his first football game. He was the latest sensation in the comedy field, selling over one million records the first year of the release, which garnered him a spot on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Griffith got on the elevator in the lobby at the Cape Fear Hotel that first day of the festival with a gaggle of the girls in the queen's court. "Anybody here representing Chapel Hill?" he asked.

I introduced myself to the engaging Mr. Griffith, proud that we shared the same alma mater. We chatted while the elevator rose to the fourth floor. The other May Queens were pea-green with envy that one of the celebrities had exchanged more than the usual superficial greeting — a real conversation — with the girl in "Formosa." During the festival, Andy always waved heartily every time he saw me, grinning that big Griffith smile and calling out, "Hey, Carolina!"

Our schedule was frantic but fun. Friday morning was the bridge dedication at Greenfield Lake Park, where city dignitaries and alligators gathered to extol the beauty of the water, the cypress trees, the naked azaleas and the newly constructed footbridge. At 11 a.m., on to the Cottage Lane Outdoor Art Show, where local artists exhibited their work in the narrow alleyway in the shadow of the First Presbyterian Church. Next, the Airlie Garden luncheon, where we were welcomed by our hosts, the Corbetts, under the 400-year-old Airlie live oak, a showstopper in their garden. Then a late afternoon cocktail party at Fergus' Ark, where we were allowed to wear street clothes and looked more like the hip college girls we were than escapees from Tara. Finally, we ended our day with a dance at the Cape Fear Country Club. Not a schedule for the weak of knee.

Fergus Ark, no longer a working boat, floated at the foot of Market Street in the Cape Fear River, permanently secured to the dock. I remember it vividly, not only because of the unique setting, but because it was my first encounter with smoked oysters on toast points. I promptly decided that the delicacy was the ultimate hors d'oeuvre. Up until then, my Alabama self considered celery stuffed with pimiento cheese haute cuisine.

The grand Azalea Festival parade down Third Street kicked off Saturday's activities. We waved vigorously not only in our effort to appear royal, but to stave off hypothermia in the chilly morning air. Then on to a luncheon at The Surf Club before The Kings' Coronation at Brogden Hall. The final event was the big Coronation Ball at Lumina, a turn-of-the-century beachfront pavilion overlooking the Atlantic Ocean at Wrightsville Beach. The architectural beauty was beginning to look a bit like Mrs. Haversham's wedding cake, but you could still see how magnificent it must have been in its salad days. The spacious dance floor at Lumina was spectacular with enormous revolving mirrored balls, the glittering facets splattering lights across the polished oak floor.

I even had an up close and personal encounter at Lumina with the Million Dollar Mermaid herself. In the ladies' room, Esther Williams was peering into the large mirror over the vanity. She was as beautiful up close as she was from afar. She pressed that perfect hair into place and took a sip from her drink on the vanity in front of her. I wondered if she used Vaseline on tonight's hairdo. This night her hair was pinned up with fresh white flowers woven into the braids, topped by the Queen's tiara. Since her back was to me, I had the perfect opportunity to stare.

Esther's shoulders were incredibly wide, the shoulders of a linebacker . . . or a professional swimmer. Turns out, she was in the midst of a meltdown from a wardrobe malfunction. Her heavy strapless satin dress had come unhooked in the back, and she made no bones about expressing her frustration and discomfort. Her royal dress was impossible to maneuver. She asked if I could help her out.

As I struggled with the annoyed Queen's uncooperative hooks, I was engulfed with a stream of curses. The mushroom of air was blue with her salty language, generously laced with F-bombs. Remember this was the South in 1958. I had only read these words in books. After all, I was a Tuscaloosa girl; only Birmingham girls used that kind of language. Thankfully the cuss words were not aimed at me, but at the unruly dress. I finally closed the last pesky hook and breathed a sigh of relief. Queen Azalea XI took a long, slow, regal swig from her drink. I had already heard her usual was vodka on the rocks. How decadent! How glamorous! How grand! And I was a tiny sequin in this glittery, glitzy Hollywood world.

I saw Andy Griffith in a Wilmington restaurant decades later, before he retired from the locally filmed *Matlock*. My lunch buddies spotted him and pointed him out. I had not seen him in person in five decades. Andy glanced briefly at us as we passed his table leaving the restaurant. Our eyes met for a second. Then he looked away. He didn't say, "Hey Carolina!"

Nan Graham is a frequent contributor to Salt *Magazine, and one of our favorite people, with or without her fuchsia gown.*

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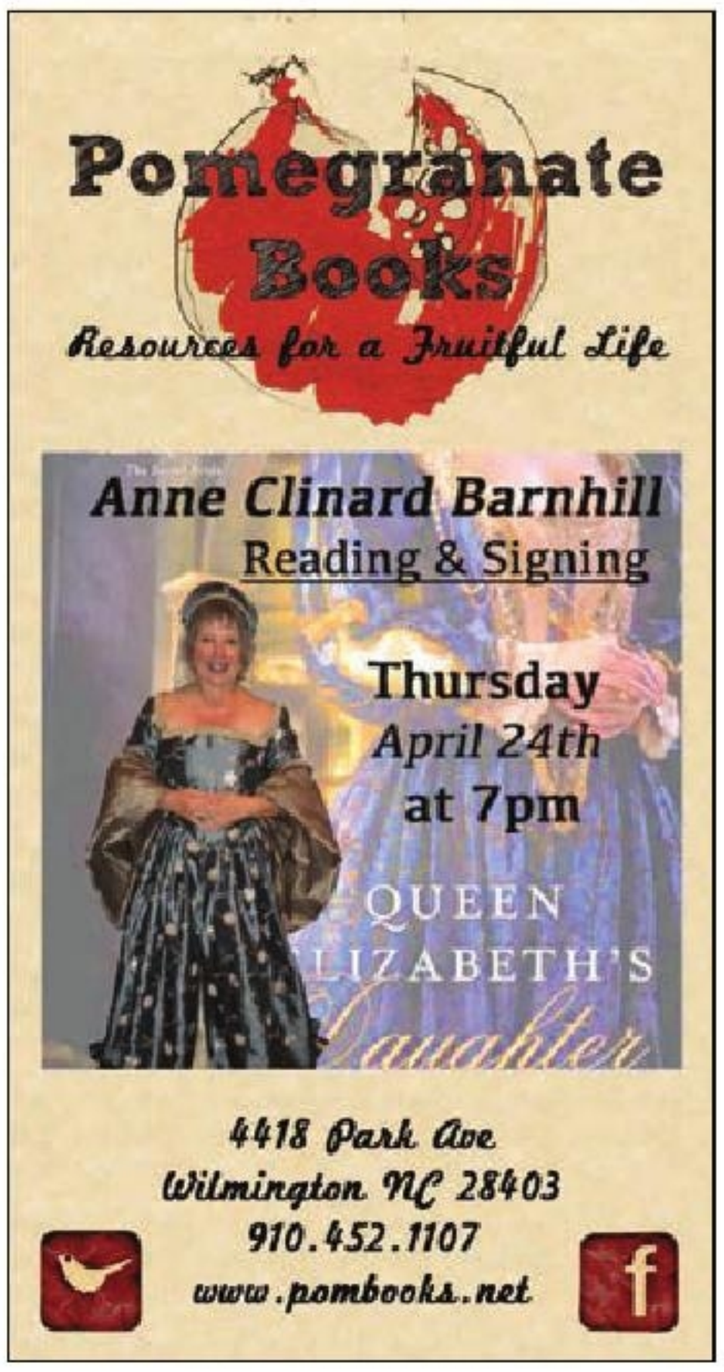

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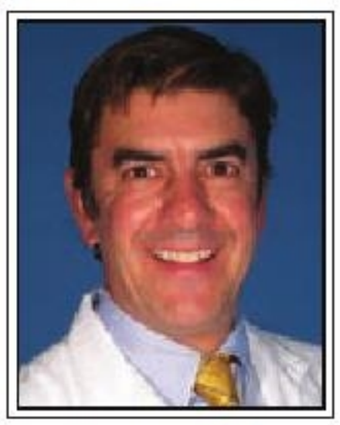

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The Gift of a Fighting Spirit

Pianist Roya Weyerhaeuser's long journey home to Wilmington

By Susan Taylor Block

Having heard her play, I knew of Roya Weyerhaeuser's extraordinary talent, but I'd not had the opportunity to meet her until recently. I approached her gingerly. Shaking hands with an internationally known concert pianist is a delicate thing and I didn't want to squeeze too hard. Nothing should crimp the flow of musical light that streams from her keyboard.

Roya comes from a musical family. Her father liked music and, as a boy, had tried his hand at violin, but it was generally unacceptable for men to be musicians in Iran. Her grandfather banned his son from playing and smashed the instrument. Although her brother learned to play the piano and violin, Roya had an advantage. "She has the ear," her father said of her when she began studying piano at age 4. At age 6, Roya was accepted at the Tehran Conservatory of Music. Her first solo performance came three years later when she played Grieg's "Sonata in E Minor, Op. 7" for an audience of sixty. "I was so frightened," said Roya. "It showed on my face and in my posture. I just slinked across the stage. My teacher said I must acquire an air of confidence."

And so she did.

The strength and fight within Roya show up in many ways, most dramatically in her exit from her native country. Her father was working at the American Embassy in Tehran in 1977, when anti-Shah demonstrations were becoming common. That year, her parents moved to New York. On January 1, 1979, Roya made her first attempt to join them. By that time, political trouble had escalated, making it imperative that she leave quickly. She arrived at the airport to discover mayhem. West Germany and Canada had just advised their nationals to leave the country. Her seat was cancelled. She stayed in the airport for four days, fighting for a flight. She departed Tehran and the friends of her young lifetime on January 5. Just eleven days later, the Shah of Iran fled to Egypt and Iran's new government took full command.

Once situated in New York, Roya entered the Juilliard School, where she studied under noted teacher Adele Marcus. Her fellow students included the likes of Byron Janis, Peter Orth and Neil Sedaka. Sedaka became famous and royalty-rich in the 1960s and '70s for the simplest of his compositions: pop songs like "Breaking Up is Hard to Do" and "Love Will Keep us Together." Though Roya thought she had left her performance nerves behind, Neil Sedaka brought them out again when he showed up at Adele Marcus' studio during one of her lessons. "He was so well-known by then. He stood and listened while I played Chopin's 'Polonaise in A-flat major'. I was so intimidated that I motioned him away, saying, 'Wouldn't you like to go into the kitchen?'"

Roya's fighting spirit was mustered into play again at Juilliard when Adele Marcus told her she would not be able to keep pace with other concert pianists because her hands were so small. "You're never going to make it," Ms. Marcus said. "Your hands don't even span an octave." But that just made Roya work all the harder. She learned to manage her fingers in such a way that movement made up for dimensions.

While still living in New York, she met Henry Weyerhaeuser at a riding stable. They were married in 1981 and now have two grown sons, Justin and Ian. In 1981, the family moved to Wilmington, where Roya has received many honors, including a Key to the City and, in 1984, the UNCW's Albert Schweitzer Medal for Artistry. Today, her fame spans far beyond New Hanover County. She has performed throughout Europe, works with the New York Philharmonic, and was a guest artist and speaker for the Beethoven Society of Austria.

In addition to performing the works of others, Roya is a composer.

"I don't sleep well. Much of my music comes to me in the night," she says. When that happens, she slips away to the concert piano in the soundproof room of her house. Though the miracle of pulling melodies from the air comes naturally to her, amusingly, she finds naming her compositions difficult.

Since her childhood days when she would share her school lunches with friends less fortunate, Roya has always been compassionate and generous. And she is a splendid steward of her talents, giving liberally to non-profits such as Duke Children's Hospital and Welcome Home Angel, Inc.

"God gave me enough to share," she says, simply.

Lucky for us, she shares her incredible gift with the Port City.

Susan Taylor Block is a Wilmington native who enjoys researching and writing about her hometown.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

Classical Cuisine

Good music, like good food, has a lot to do with personal taste. Lunch with pianist Norman Bemelmans at Osteria Cicchetti is one sweet sonata

By Dana Sachs

Two years ago, my family hit the jackpot. My husband was awarded a Fulbright grant to teach in Hungary, so we moved to Budapest for seven months. Because one of the gaps in my education was classical music — I didn't know Bach from Bartók — I decided to spend my time in that great music city listening to and learning as much as I could.

Reader, it was sublime. I could go on and on about the cello concerto I heard in a little chamber music hall on the second floor of the Hungarian State Opera House; or about the way that conservatory students rush down the streets of Budapest, their instrument cases banging against their backs; or about the intimate café above a music store, where I listened to Liszt while seated only five feet away from the blind pianist.

I came back home very satisfied and snobbish. In Wilmington, I thought, my life as a music devotee was pretty much over.

Then I discovered that the classical music scene here is not bad. In fact, for a city this size, it's kind of amazing. In one ten-day period this past winter, for example, I heard the North Carolina Symphony, a chamber music recital, the Cavani String Quartet, and the world famous pianist Emanuel Ax, who played Brahms and Beethoven at Kenan Auditorium.

"There's always been an intense musical appreciation here," Norman Bemelmans told me over lunch one day at Osteria Cicchetti. "It doesn't have the centuries-old feeling that music is life and life is music, like in Budapest or Vienna, but Wilmington has nothing to be ashamed about."

Norman would know. He is both the director of the Office of Cultural Affairs at UNCW and a classical pianist who performs regularly across the United States and in Europe. "There's an extraordinary level of fine musical opportunity in Wilmington," he told me. "It's surprising that there's an ability to support such variety."

In some ways, it made sense that we had decided to meet at an Italian restaurant because Norman was born in Italy. If you know about post-World War I armistice treaties, however — and, until I lived in Budapest, I did not — then you know that the victorious powers (Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States) carved up Europe as they saw fit. The town where Norman's family lived, long a part of Austria, was suddenly Italian.

People call Osteria Cicchetti "the O.C." If you try to pronounce the full name, you'll understand why. Norman, who has spent most of his life in this country and speaks English without a trace of an accent, nonetheless has an elegance and refinement that practically screams "Old World." Not surprisingly, he had no problem with the name Osteria Cicchetti. Knowing his background, I asked, "Do you speak Italian?"

How do I describe the look he gave me? Well, let me ask you this: If you woke up one morning to find that Wilmington had, overnight, become a part of South Carolina, would you make a big effort to learn to speak Myrtle Beach? I think not. Norman said about his town, "You don't speak Italian there." They spoke German.

Still, no hard feelings. He loves the O.C. He suggested that we start with the caprese salad, a mix of fresh basil, mozzarella, arugula and both sliced and cherry tomatoes, all dressed in a balsamic glaze. "I think it's delicious, to use the expected word," said Norman. "I'm not always a big fan of arugula, but somehow the combination with the dressing works extremely well."

He also suggested that we try one of the pizzas. The O.C. makes an oblong, thin-crust version, which is more classically Italian than the pies you get at most American pizzerias. Because the crust is so thin — "crunchy," as Norman called it — it's more like a flavorful cracker than a bread, and it gives the toppings them-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

selves a starring role. We tried the Margherita, slices of tomato and basil leaves melted into a layer of mozzarella. The result is succulent and delicious without being overly heavy.

At lunchtime, the O.C. offers a selection of sandwiches. The roasted veggie sandwich, a sliced baguette packed with brightly colored layers of summer vegetables, roasted peppers and portobello mushrooms, was hearty and flavorful, but maybe a bit heavy on the arugula, according to Norman (clearly, it's a question of taste). We also tried the risotto daily special, the creamy pasta-like rice paired, that day, with large and beautifully seasoned grilled shrimp. "I give it top marks," Norman said. "It's a nice mix of textures and tastes."

I loved the food, but I'd been pondering certain questions for the past two years and, now that I had a concert pianist across the table from me, I wanted to ask them. Once our dessert arrived — a creamy mocha- and chocolate-laden tiramisu that was so decadent Norman said, "It probably ought to be against the law" — I turned philosophical.

"What makes a great pianist?" I asked.

Norman dug his spoon into the cake and thought for a moment. "Two things. First is the ability to make, for example, Beethoven sound like Beethoven. And, second, is the ability to bring a personal voice to it. Vladimir Horowitz called that kind of a performer 'a special soul.'"

As an example, Norman told me about Horowitz himself, whom he heard perform when the world-famous Ukrainian-born pianist was in his 70s. When Horowitz walked out on the stage, Norman remembered, "all you saw was this very small, elderly gentleman." But then he began to play. "You only had to hear one note, and you were transformed."

Another question. Do the size of pianists' hands affect which pieces they play best?

To some degree, the answer is yes. "My hands are large," Norman said, holding them up. "So I like playing the big, big sonatas." Because each of his hands can easily cover ten keys, he can reach notes that are far apart on the keyboard. Conversely, he told me, bunching his fingers so that they looked like too many people crammed into an elevator, "Mozart and Bach" — which often require fast movements over a small number of keys — "are not that easy for me."

Hands don't determine a pianist's entire destiny, however. Though the physically demanding scores of Rachmaninoff, for example, can seem off-limits to a small-handed player, the Spanish pianist Alicia de Larrocha, who was tiny, managed to perform Rachmaninoff beautifully. "I don't know how she did that," Norman said.

Next, I made a confession: "I have come to love Beethoven, but I haven't really learned to enjoy Bach."

I suspect that, if I keep listening, I'll come around to Bach. But music, like food, also has a lot to do with taste. Norman illustrated that point by recounting a story he'd heard from the Hungarian composer Barnabás Dukay. As a boy, Dukay would sit at a piano near the window and play Bach. On the branches of a tree outside, the birds would stop whatever they were doing and just sit there, transfixed by the music.

Then Dukay switched from Bach to Beethoven. "Immediately," he told Norman, "the birds all flew away."

"Really?" Norman asked, doubtful. Was the Hungarian really suggesting that wild birds preferred Bach over Beethoven?

Dukay shrugged. "I'm just reporting it as I saw it."

Clearly, I'm no bird when it comes to Beethoven. Last fall, I heard Norman play Beethoven's "Waldstein Sonata" at Kenan Auditorium and found the music completely enthralling. The day we met for lunch, I'd been listening to a recording of the sonata in my car as I drove to the O.C.

"What's it like," I asked now, "to play the 'Waldstein Sonata?'" I understood the hours of labor that a performer can put into mastering a piece. How did it feel, then, after all that effort, to sit down in front of an instrument and make such music?

Norman's smile made me grateful for his talent and — I have to be honest — a little jealous, too. Then he said, "It makes doing what I do worth doing."

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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Bittersweet

A sophisticated taste well worth acquiring

By Frank Daniels III

Offering a Negroni to your guests is an excellent test of friendship. Some guests will immediately offer a quick nod, a slight smile and a quiet thanks to your extremely sophisticated palate and cocktail knowledge, while others will take a sip, gag and accuse you of trying to make them sick. For the latter, pour them a glass of wine (cheap, of course) and reserve their Negroni as your second one.

The Negroni, a variation of the Americano that was so regularly ordered by Count Camillo Negroni at the Casoni Bar in Florence that the cocktail was named for him, is a refreshingly different cocktail that challenges your taste buds. There are few cocktails that have as distinctive an impact as the Americano and the Negroni.

The essential flavoring of the Negroni is an Italian bitters, Campari. Campari's distinctive red color, originally derived from carmine, a bright red dye from the shells of cochineal insects, and intense bitter flavor have made it an extremely popular aperitif and mixer since the 1840s, when Turin barkeep Gaspare Campari infused neutral spirits with more than sixty herbs, spices, barks, fruit peels and other botanicals. Campari was a master marketer and developed popular cocktails to promote his aperitif. Campari soda is still bottled and sold today in Italy as a refreshing spritz, and his Americano became one of the most popular drinks in Italy. During Prohibition, Campari was one of the few spirits legally available, so the Americano and a Campari and soda became very popular as well.

Campari is a taste explosion, and cocktails built with it are distinctive and memorable. But what makes these cocktails extraordinary are the balances achieved by mixing equal proportions. Few cocktails call for an equal balance, and these classics remind us of the simple creativity exhibited by early bar masters.

Both of our featured cocktails call for Italian (sweet) vermouth, which is experiencing a revival of sorts. To maximize the flavor of your Negroni or Americano, look for some of the now available traditional vermouths like Dolin or Carpano Antica. The Americano is the lighter, and perhaps more refreshing of the two. The Negroni, with equal amounts of gin, Campari and vermouth, is a great example of proportion balance. Both cocktails are delightful and very refreshing on a warm spring evening.

Enjoy.

Frank Daniels III is an editor and writer living in Nashville, Tennessee, who frequently visits Wilmington. Contact him at fdanielsiii@mac.com.

Negroni

1 oz. Plymouth Gin
1 oz. Campari
1 oz. sweet (Italian) vermouth
Orange slice

Into a cocktail shaker with ice, pour the gin, Campari and sweet vermouth. Shake vigorously and strain into an ice-filled highball glass. Garnish with orange slice.

Americano

1 1/2 o.z Campari
1 1/2 oz. sweet (Italian) vermouth
3-5 oz. club soda
Lemon slice

Stir the Campari and sweet vermouth in a mixing pitcher with sufficient ice. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass, top with club soda and gently stir to mix. Garnish with lemon slice.

Doing the Watusi

For many of us, music is transcendental. We just gotta get up and dance

The Rusty Nail

By Jason Frye

On a warm spring night, before the opening acts at the late-night college bars begin to tune up, take a stroll through downtown. You won't be able to go more than forty steps without hearing some street corner busker, storefront blues man or restaurant crooner. They're baring it all for tips and the simple pleasure of making a joyful noise. And us, we're just here to listen. Most of us are anyway.

For some of us, music is transcendental. Go to Satellite Bar on any given Sunday for the Bluegrass Jam and you'll see kids — a handful this time of year, a herd by mid-summer — spellbound by the ecstasy that is claw-hammer banjo. They'll dance in place, the youngest bouncing at the knees, tip toes on the floor; the oldest spin and laugh and fall over one another. Adults too will get in on it, but at Satellite, you're more likely to see toe tapping and leg slapping than full-scale dancing, though it's not a rule.

One recent Sunday, the bar was packed with regulars and an influx of newcomers from a Wilmington area Singles' Club. A club member started dancing, his ostrich skin cowboy boots tapping out a decent double rhythm, when another not-too-shy member decided she'd join him. They danced for a song, pulled closer and danced for a second.

By the time the third song was over, they were long gone.

The dance floor was empty for a while until a woman decided it was time to show off her clogging skills and put on a real display — her upper body nearly motionless, her legs pistoning around her like they were motorized. She was amazing. No one took to the floor with much vigor once she'd finished.

A couple of blocks over, on Fifth Street, is The Rusty Nail. This particular venue intimidates some folks, and though it does look a little grim on the outside, the people at the bar and tables inside are anything but. Especially on Tuesday evenings. That's when the Cape Fear Blues Society hosts a weekly blues jam session. Slow hand, Delta and Chicago blues solos accumulate in the air like clouds. Driving bass lines are their thunder. Vocals, their lightning. But the best part is when the storm breaks. Late in the evening, when everyone's well-watered and the musicians are limber, the first drops fall. A solo dancer begins to writhe as if her body is a string and her vibration is the music itself. Then a couple dancing close, like they're afraid to let go. It goes on like this for the rest of the evening.

It's a different scene from Satellite. Different crowd. Different music.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

Same goes for another regular, and surprising, musical outlet in town: the Cameron Art Museum.

On the first Thursday of the month, the CAM buzzes with jazz lovers. They crowd the CAM Café for 5:30 dinner reservations and devour the neoveau-Southern food of chef Jess Cabo before heading out onto the patio for an early evening, open-air jazz concert. There are orderly rows of chairs, a small sea of two- and four-top tables, and, of course, a dance floor. The crowd is mostly CAM members, so it's more blue hair than bluesy, and that means two things: There's a lot of polite clapping after each solo, and the dance floor is seldom used.

Except one night.

In the middle of a high-spirited number, the band was in that place familiar musicians go to, that place where every note overlaps the others, leaving no gaps in the music that aren't purposeful and truly weaving a wall of sound. In the middle of this number, the crowd was growing rowdy. The polite applause had given way to a couple of tentative *Yeah!*s, and toes were starting to tap. The band was there, the crowd was there, and it was time for a solo.

That's when this woman, a well-put-together CAM member in an expensive looking skirt and a chunky "I-bought-it-at-the-museum-gift-shop" necklace, had heard all she could take. She took her cue and stood up for her solo. And she danced.

She was more enthusiastic than the children at Satellite and her feet slid across the patio in shoes every bit as snazzy as those ostrich skin boots. She danced alone, her feet shuffling and keeping time, but unlike our mountain dancer, it was her upper body that did the work. She was a combination of the mountain dancer's energy and the rhythmic writhing of our blues gal. She shook her hair, her arms flew, that necklace swung like a pendulum. She shimmied. She turned. She damn near did the Watusi.

And when she was done, the crowd clapped. Polite at first, but building to boisterous. There were cheers and woo-hoos. For her, the crowd was louder than they were for the band that night.

Why? She was one of us. Part of the tribe of music transcendentalists who were too shy or too afraid to try to play an instrument. But she played the instrument she had, strumming her love for the sound against her body and playing for us a dance as full of grace and improvisation as any bluegrass picker, slide-guitar player or trumpet blower could muster.

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of two forthcoming travel guides. He's a barbecue judge, outdoor enthusiast, poet and lover of all things North Carolina.

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The Music of My Life

Like a multi-layered honey cake, each one delicious and sweet

By Bill Thompson

Music has been such a big part of my life that I can't decide whether it has been the accompaniment or the inspiration. Did I write the music or did I just sing along? I do know that, while music hasn't been my life, I wouldn't be living much of a life without it.

I grew up in a musical family where every gathering included some kind of musical performance by almost every member. Grandfather Thompson could play just about any instrument "by ear." Before I was born, he used to play the fiddle for local dances. I remember him listening to songs on the radio and watching him play them immediately afterward on the piano or clarinet.

I was going to be a music major in college until my professor and I mutually agreed that, since music theory was a requirement for the degree (I just wanted to sing), I should look for another line of work. But I still stayed in the music department as part of the touring choir all four years. During that time, I broadened my musical interests to include classical music and opera.

My sister and I grew up singing in the church choirs, of course, but when Aunt Mary Lee died, she left us a huge pile of sheet music. We went through it all: the syncopated rhythms of ragtime in the '20s, the big band sounds of the '30s, and especially all the songs of World War II — the songs that could briefly drown out the sound of bombs and the scream of war. They were the songs of a life — a home — worth fighting for. Remember Sinatra's version of "The House I Live In"?

When we went off to college in the '60s we played and sang folk music for anybody who would listen and especially for anybody who would pay us. We were inspired by the The Kingston Trio; Peter, Paul and Mary; Joan Baez; and all the other "folk revivalists" of the period.

Out of the folk music interest grew an appreciation for bluegrass. Somewhere along the way it lost its "hillbilly" image and evoked the heritage of the mountains and hollers, the mill villages and tobacco fields that are so much a part of who we North Carolinians are. It's back porches and pig pickin's, barbecue and hush puppies, coon hunts on cold nights and fishing on reed-covered banks.

Even as my musical interests expanded, I was never far from my eastern North Carolina roots. I still listened to The Grand Ole Opry, the honky-tonk sounds of Ernest Tubb, the silky voice of Patsy Cline and plaintive wail of Hank Williams.

At the same time, another Williams boy kept tugging me back home to the beaches, the parties, the days in the sun. Maurice Williams was his name, and the Zodiacs and The Tams and The Embers made rhythm and blues into a special sound called "beach music." Beach music is more than just music. It's a lifestyle unique to the Carolinas; a lifestyle that cuts across race and social and economic backgrounds. When "My Girl" wafts out over the sand dunes and the soft breeze from the ocean moves the sea grass in the moonlight, reflected on waves as they lap the shore, life has no boundaries and youth will last forever.

Soon after I graduated from college, I became the director of a boy's choir at what was then called Boys Home of North Carolina. I tried to incorporate as many different kinds of music as I thought the boys should appreciate, including some patriotic songs they needed to learn. I think they liked the folk songs and the patriotic songs and even some of the Broadway stuff. Classical? Not so much.

The music of my life is like a multi-layered cake. Each layer is separate, unique and wonderful. Put together it's a rich, delicious mixture that can't be duplicated or completely consumed.

One of those songs that my sister and I used to sing kinda sums up the role of music in my life. It's the second verse that you hardly ever hear from Jane Froman's "With a Song in My Heart":

In the morning I find with delight

Not a note of our music's played out.

It will be just as sweet

As an air I'll repeat

With a song in my heart.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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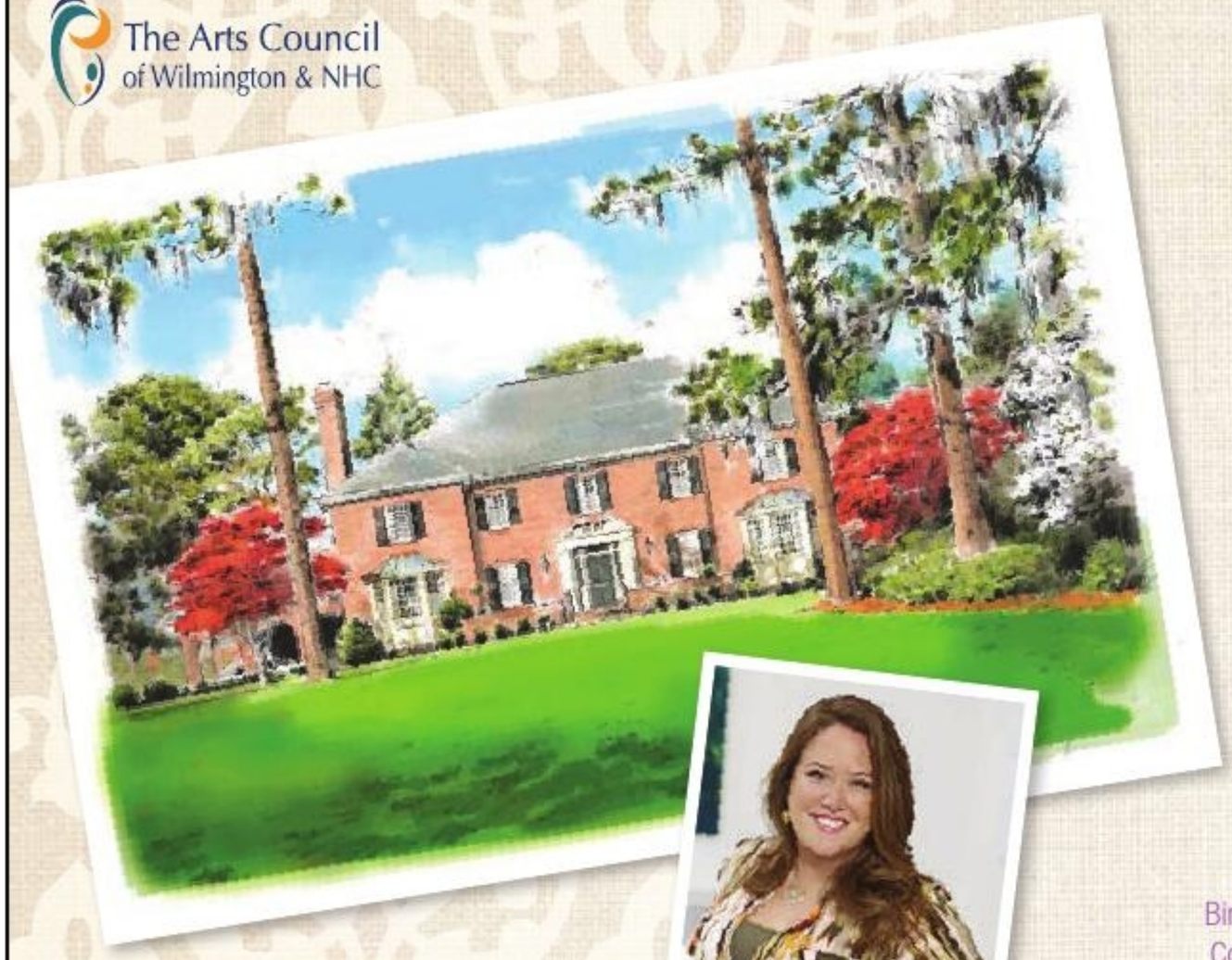

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True Exotics

Colorful non-native birds are on the rise, introduced foreign species or escapees from captivity who are now breeding

By Susan Campbell

Let's say you're walking along the sidewalks of Forest Hills (you could be anywhere) when you see a colorful bird that looks like — but surely can't be — a monk parakeet. Or maybe it *is* a monk parakeet. Or a scarlet macaw. Or some other unlikely species trying its luck in an unfamiliar habitat.

Wherever you go, there's always a chance of spotting an exotic. Perhaps they've escaped from damaged cages or pens (or an open window), or became so large or aggressive that their captors released them.

Here, even along the southeastern coast of North Carolina, there are *feral* species (birds that have escaped and are breeding) and *non-native* species, which, for a variety of reasons, have been released/introduced to the landscape. There are also exotic escapees that live out their lives in the wild although, most often, only because humans feed them.

For birds of any size, keeping flight feathers short on at least one wing will render them incapable of sustained flight. (Note: Birds molt at least once a year and thus require regular clipping.) Should new feathers emerge unbeknownst to the owner, the bird may be capable of flying short distances — fast enough to avoid being caught — even if its wing muscles are not well developed. Subsequently, the bird may succumb to elements or predators. But not always!

Certain birds carry identification in the form of leg bands. Of course, getting close enough to the bird to read its owner's name and contact information can be challenging if not impossible. Having been raised and fed by people, escapees are often tame, which increases the bird's odds of being returned to its owner.

Non-native waterfowl are the exotics we encounter most frequently in our area. Some folks have collections of colorful ducks and/or geese on their farms. Muscovy and graylag geese show up from time to time. Some years ago, a ringed teal was observed on Randall Pond in Anne McCrary City Park. Recently a mandarin duck appeared with a pair of mallards and has been putting on quite a show on a small private pond in town. In some places, mute swans are erroneously installed to control Canada geese by driving the smaller birds away from subdivision, park or golf course ponds.

Various doves, parrots and parakeets also turn up in the escapee population given their popularity in the pet trade. Pigeons, or rock doves, as well as European starlings, have been a regular sight for over two hundred years, having been introduced as familiar birds by early British settlers. House sparrows are a somewhat recent addition. They were accidentally released by a bird shop owner in Central Park in the 1850s.

Out-of-place species can become established over time, which may not be a good thing. Exotics live with the same threats as native species, such as snakes, hawks, foxes, etc. And if the foreign birds are better at utilizing particular resources, they may out-compete more desirable species. Both starlings and house sparrows, for instance, are more aggressive than their native counterparts. They effectively displace them, especially in urban environments where they encounter lower rates of predation.

Larger, more long-lived species may prove more problematic. Canada geese were introduced here to eastern North Carolina in recent decades. Since they breed freely and are very good parents, the populations have continued to steadily increase. Canadas have reached nuisance status by virtue of the volume of fecal material they produce, the aggressive behavior of adults during the breeding season as well as the incessant noise flocks produce most of the year. Landowners and municipalities have options for managing geese or other exotic species that require both state and federal permission in addition to significant resources.

So grab your binoculars and take a walk. Sometimes you don't have to go far to spot an exotic!

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or by calling (910) 949-3207.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRETCHEN SCHRAMM

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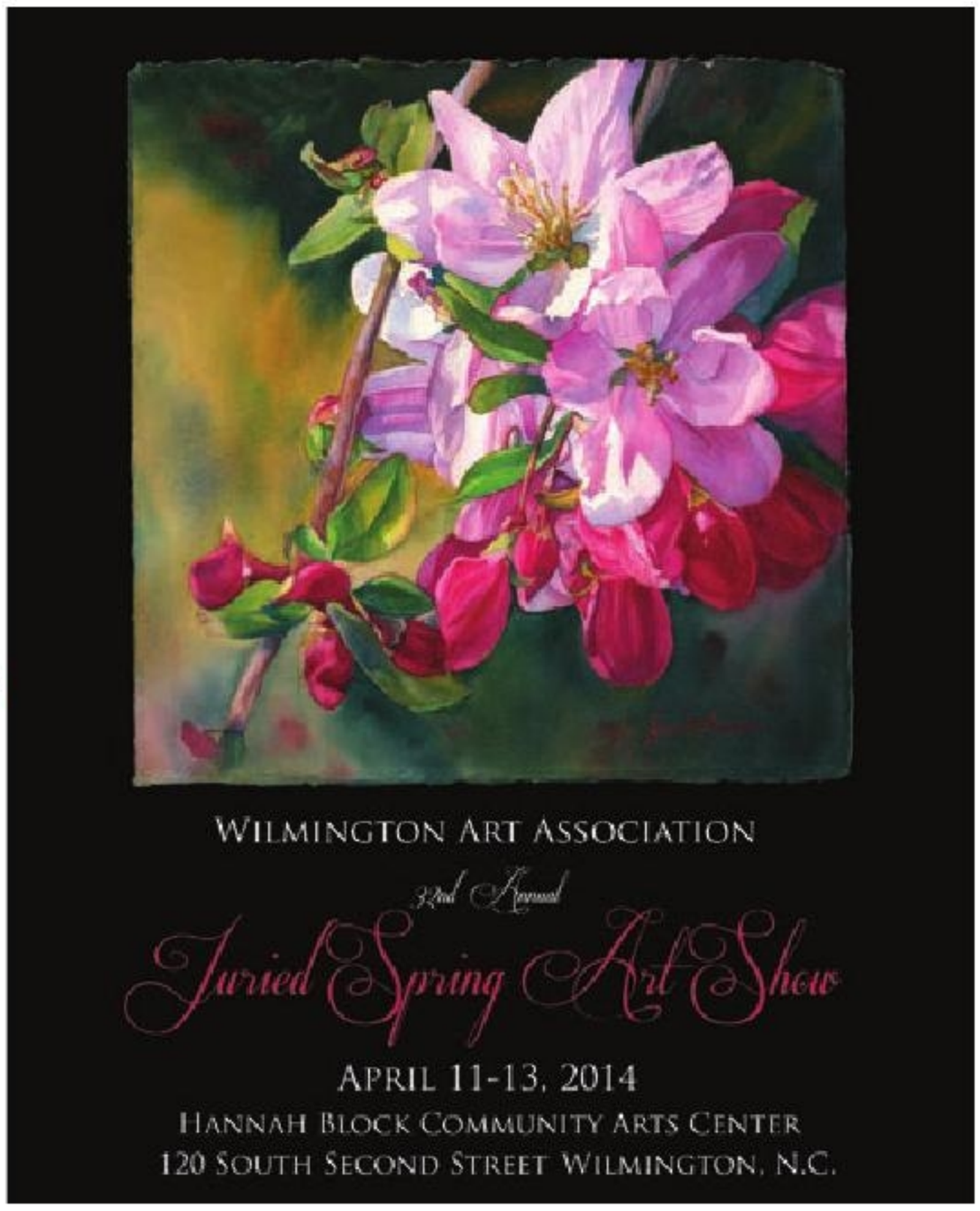
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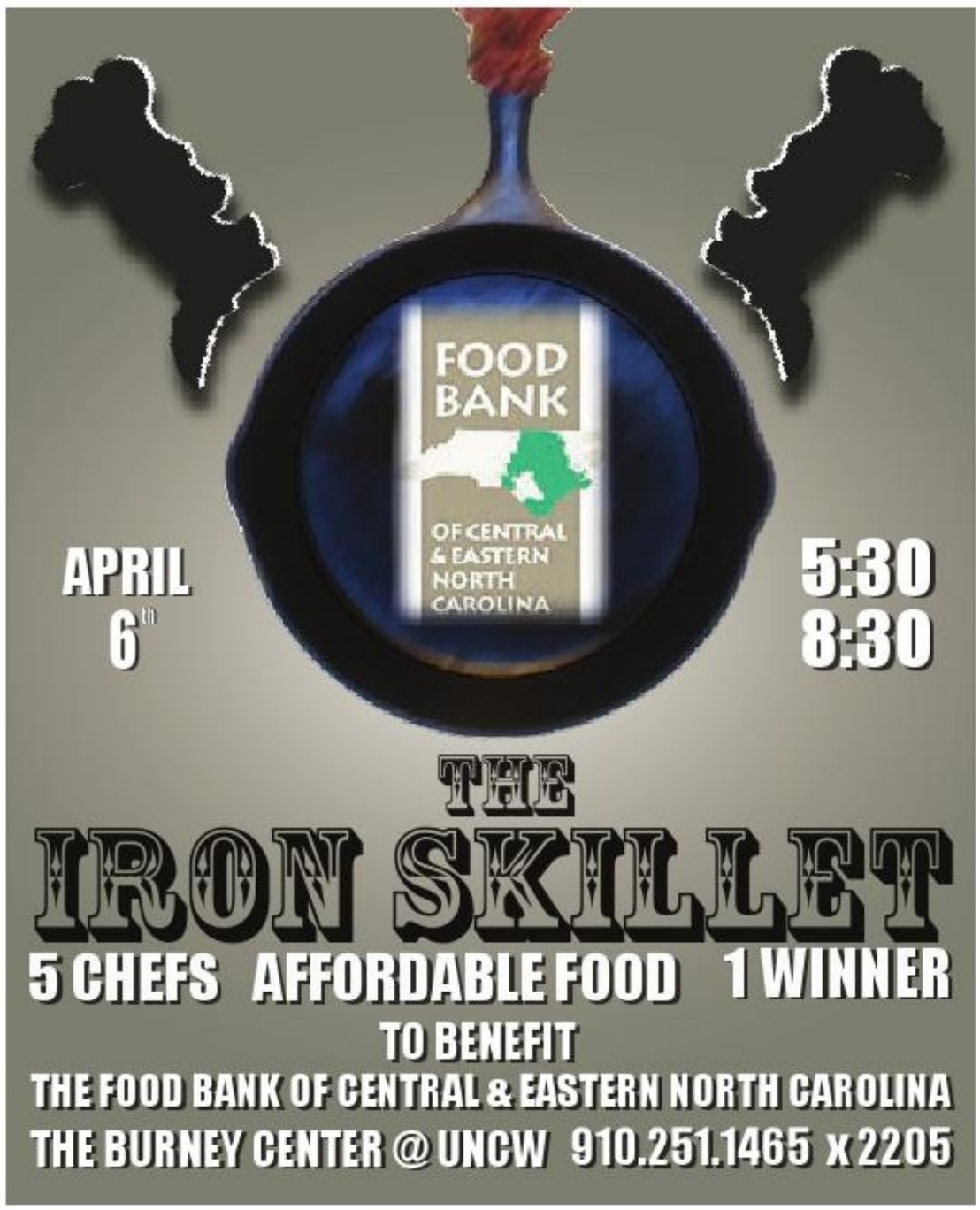
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The Late Great Azalea Open

Wilmington's sporting rite of spring

Golfer Arnold Palmer accepting certificate from 1957 Azalea Festival Queen Kathryn Grayson at the Azalea Open Golf Tournament.

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By Lee Pace

The professional golf tour of the late 1940s was a breezy enterprise still in the shadow of amateur golf and built largely around chambers of commerce in warm-climate cities. The pros might generate some visitor traffic and national publicity — if nothing else get a city's name out across the 48 states onto the newswires. Purses were just into five figures and a champion's share barely clipped a thousand bucks in the immediate years following World War II. Some of the pros lived out of their cars. They hired local kids to shag their balls and spent more cash buying-in at the poker table than paying entry fees to golf tournaments.

The city of Wilmington and Cape Fear Country Club (one of the state's oldest clubs) ventured into this realm in 1949. For more than two decades, the Azalea Open was a springtime fixture on the pro tour, for about half of its existence serving as a tune-up to the Masters the following weekend. The pros enjoyed the culinary bounty of the sea and were embraced by a cordial and attentive populace.

"Due to the red carpet treatment the pros get here," the *Wilmington Star-News* offered in 1957, "many of them consider Wilmington as one of the friendliest cities on the PGA tour."

"The Azalea Open had a real homespun feeling," says Hamilton Hicks, whose father was one of the early tournament administrators. "The pros lived in homes with the members; we didn't have all the hotels and motels like we do now. They ate home-cooked meals and developed personal relationships with the members and townsfolk."

A retired Wilmington physician and avid gardener named Dr. W. Houston Moore conceived the idea in 1947 for the community to stage a festival each April to celebrate the beautiful azaleas, dogwoods and other flowering plants that turned Greenfield Park, Airlie Gardens and Orton Plantation into a kaleidoscope of springtime color and fragrance. Hugh Morton was elected the first president, and that inaugural four-day festival in 1948 christened the tradition of having a Hollywood starlet as the guest of honor and building a weekend around garden parties, a parade, a variety show, fireworks, art displays, barbecues and parties well into the wee hours. The first festival made

a $5,000 profit, ensuring its life for another year, and the idea was hatched to add a professional golf tournament to the mix in 1949.

The Azalea Festival continues and this April will conduct its 67th rendition.

Unfortunately, the Azalea Open survived only twenty-three years, its demise hastened by the very qualities that made it special. It just could never get big enough and rich enough to keep pace with new tournaments in pro golf as the 1970s evolved. Ron Green of *The Charlotte News* remembers Tony Lema in the locker room one time saying, "I'd go play in the traffic, but there's no traffic here."

"Wilmington was a tiny place, a sleepy place at the time," says Leslie Fleisher, who grew up playing golf and caddying at Pine Valley Country Club in Wilmington and was 6 years old when the tournament began. "This was many years before I-40. The town simply could not make the purse grow. There were no large corporations to step up."

The first Azalea Open was held the third week in April 1949, with a field of sixty-two golfers (forty-six pros and sixteen amateurs) competing. Included in the field were three North Carolinians — Johnny Palmer of Badin, Clayton Heafner of Charlotte, and Al Smith of Winston-Salem. Cary Middlecoff was one of the headliners, having left his Memphis dental practice two years earlier to, as the *Star-News* said, "dig divots for gold." The gold was relative, of course, as the purse was $10,000 with $2,000 to the winner. Henry Ransom was the champion, shooting a 12-under score of 276 for four rounds.

The course, designed in 1922 by Pinehurst's Donald Ross, then lengthened and strengthened by the architect in 1946, played 6,825 yards — which might equate to 8,000 or more today when you consider the pros drove the ball only 240 yards with persimmon heads and inconsistent balls and truly knew the skills of playing 2-irons and 4-woods.

Dutch Harrison, Lloyd Mangrum, Jerry Barber and Bob Toski won early Azalea Opens, and Barber would win twice more over the next decade in Wilmington. Local favorites Mike Souchak (former Duke golfer) and a 29-year-old Arnold Palmer (Wake Forest) won back to back in 1956–57.

"The Azalea Open was a big deal, a lot of local fanfare," says Fleisher. "It was a local tournament run by local people. It was the last event before the Masters, so there was a lot of build-up and it was the last tune-up for these guys before Augusta. It was a wonderful event. I have a lot of great memories. It was huge for kids like us. The tour was a laid-back place then. The guys played cards, drank heavy and chased the members' wives."

"Everyone was very much at ease, except for the last day," adds Hicks. "In those days, the players came here to play instead of going to Augusta to practice. Cary Middlecoff said you don't get the same sense from practice as you do playing in front of a crowd. The crowds were manageable and friendly. The players would speak, courtesies were extended both ways."

Bruce Fleisher was five years younger than Les and remembers the effect the golfers had on a young boy.

"The lifestyle they led, the clothes they wore, the way they played the game — it gave me a picture of what I wanted to do with my life," says Bruce, who went on to play the PGA Tour, winning once on the regular tour and 18 times on the Champions Tour. "The way we learned golf back then was to mimic the good players. We didn't have instructors like kids do today. I remember Bob Shave. He gave me a golf ball. He had powerful leg action, I can remember that distinctly."

The Cape Fear Hotel was the tournament headquarters, though some of the golfers and visiting media liked the Kitty Cottage at Wrightsville Beach.

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Among the popular dining establishments were Fergus' Ark, a restaurant in an old banana boat moored at the foot of Princess Street, and Faircloth's Oyster Roast in Wrightsville Beach.

Bobby Benson remembers kids with "C" averages or better getting out of school to caddie, this long before the modern practice of pros carrying permanent caddies around the nation week after week. Benson had Barber's bag in 1963 when Barber won and got $100 for the week. Another year he got $100 from Julius Boros and two dozen used golf balls from Boros' automobile trunk.

Years later, Benson was in Las Vegas when the PGA Champions Tour came through and happened to be at the 18th green when Barber, who won twice on the elders' tour, finished his round. Benson approached Barber, introduced himself and laughed when Barber turned to his caddie and said, "This kid's been following me for thirty years to get paid for the Azalea Open."

Irwin Smallwood of the *Greensboro Daily News* remembers the year in the early 1960s when the Battleship North Carolina was first brought to Wilmington and moored on the Cape River as a public memorial. Smallwood got into a conversation with golfer Jay Hebert, who mentioned that he'd been the previous day to tour the battleship. Hebert earned a Purple Heart as a Marine at Iwo Jima and told Smallwood about seeing the Battleship N.C. arrive at the Pacific island in the thick of World War II and unleash a blizzard of gunfire.

"She was the most beautiful sight in the world to us," Hebert said.

Palmer and Jack Nicklaus played the Azalea Open before they became household names. Palmer almost won two in a row, winning in 1957 and losing a playoff to Howie Johnson the next year. Palmer immediately drove to Augusta, where he shot a slick 80 in a practice round playing with Ben Hogan. Afterward Palmer overheard Hogan in the locker room asking someone, "How'd that guy get into this tournament?" Palmer, of course, won his first of four career Masters championships that week.

By 1965 it was clear that the Azalea Open's inability to raise its purse left it vulnerable to the scheduling desires of better paying events and new ones coming along to embrace the burgeoning popularity of golf.

The Azalea paid its winner $2,000 in 1960, behind the Greater Greensboro Open's $2,800, the $4,000 from the Bing Crosby Pro-Am and $9,000 to the winner of the Buick Invitational. Five years later, the GGO had upped its first prize to $11,000, the Bob Hope Classic paid $15,000 and the Colonial Invitational $20,000. The Azalea languished with a check for $3,850 to its champion.

Greensboro bumped the Azalea from its week-before-Augusta perch in 1965, with the Azalea moving a week ahead into March. In 1966, the Azalea moved to the week after the Masters, and in 1967 the new Tournament of Champions was created in Las Vegas and played opposite the Azalea the week after Augusta. Wilmington's spot was moved to October in 1970, and its $12,000 prize to the winner was a pittance compared with its North Carolina brethren of $36,000 to the GGO champion and $30,000 to the winner of the Kemper in Charlotte. That 1970 Azalea Open was the last.

"Wilmington was essentially a warm-up for the Masters," remembers John Derr, who covered pro golf for CBS Radio, TV and assorted media outlets for more than six decades. "They had a good field and the community got behind it. You'd see the dry cleaner and Esso station and local electrical contractor sponsoring it. Sports were a means to unite a town and community, especially baseball back in that era. The players loved it, the townspeople loved it. They were proud of it. There were a lot of tournaments like that, but over time the tour outgrew them. Corporate sponsorships and TV took control. It's a shame."

Lee Pace is a Chapel Hill-based writer and has covered the golf scene in the Carolinas for more than twenty-five years.

When it comes to teens and alcohol, consistency is the golden rule.
Jill, Anheuser-Busch employee, and daughter Tori
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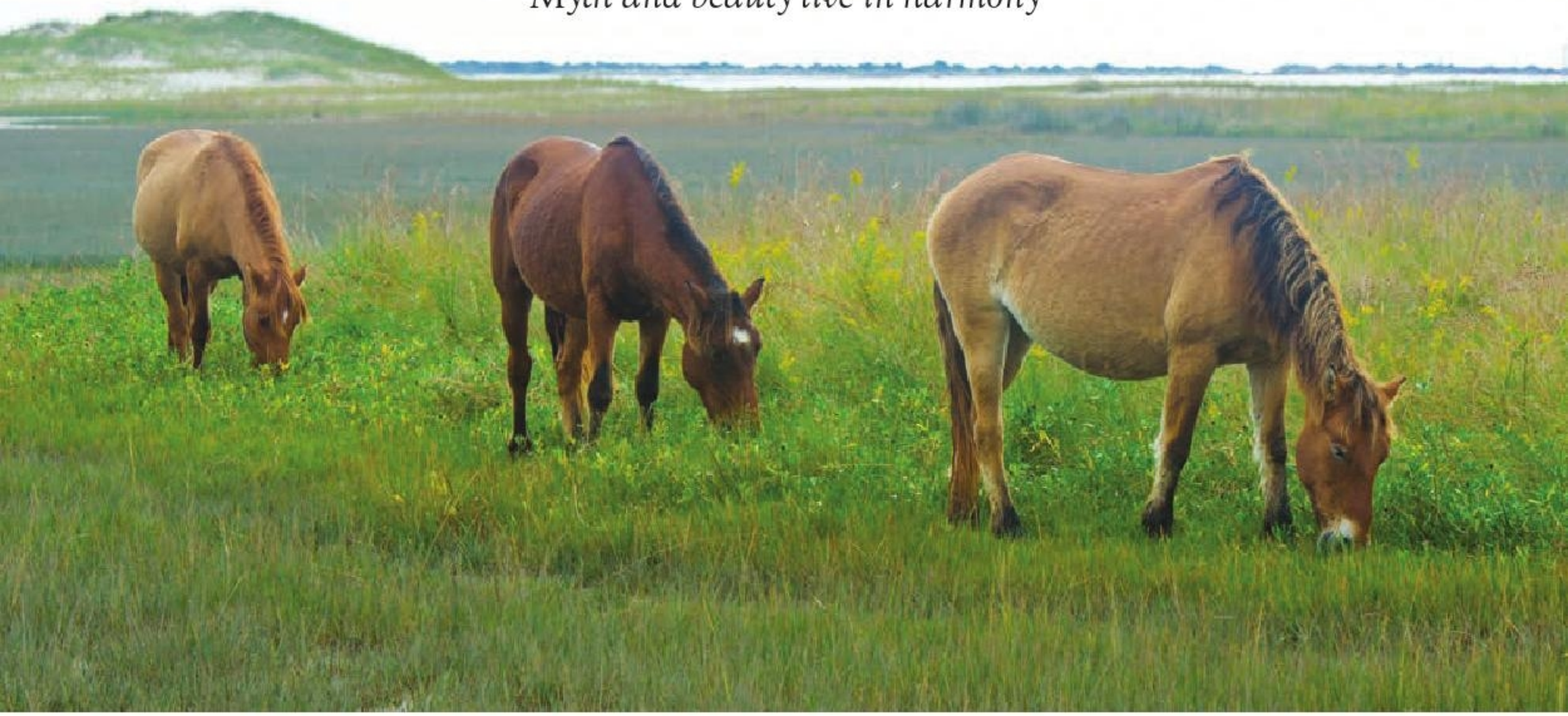
Wild Horses

Myth and beauty live in harmony



By Virginia Holman

When I was a girl, I read Marguerite Henry's classic novel, *Misty of Chincoteague*, until its pages separated from the spine like autumn leaves. Henry's descriptions of the Virginia coast were both familiar and exotic. I knew the wide marshes of my coastal home well, but my working class town had no stories of wrecked Spanish galleons. The closest we had to feral ponies was the lone mare a neighbor stalled in a tumbledown shed. She was treated so shamefully my cousins and I stopped bringing her apples. Who could bear to look into those glazed, defeated eyes?

My small town comprised a few beautiful little islands, yet conservation was considered impractical when considered at all. Conserve? Why? We all knew beauty could rarely turn a profit for long. So through the years the local islands were put to uses more immediately practical. Bull and Cow Island were logged of their white pine, then hosted herds of grazing cattle, while nearby Plum Tree Island was conscripted as a bombing range. (It's now off limits due to half a century's accumulation of unexploded ordnance.) Such islands did not fuel young girls' dreams. Misty's band of feral ponies, running free for centuries, conjured in my 10-year-old mind an ideal world, a place where people nurtured natural beauty for its own sake, and sustained it across many generations.

Now I live on one of many man-made and natural islands on the southeastern coast of North Carolina. These islands are filled with many splendid creatures: colonial shorebirds (Cape Fear spoil islands), goats (Ocean Isle), gray fox (Masonboro Island), deer (Bald Head Island), and about a hundred miles north of Wilmington on the marshy islands near Beaufort — wild ponies. When our family friend, videographer Hank Heusinkveld, mentioned he was heading to the Rachel Carson Reserve so he could shoot video of the herd, I promptly invited myself along.

The Rachel Carson Reserve is a complex of numerous small marshy islands, including the helpfully named Horse Island, Carrot Island, Town Marsh and Bird Shoal.

We've arranged to meet Paula Gillikin, the manager of the Rachel Carson Reserve, at eleven o'clock in the morning, timing our visit with favorable tides. Paula is a cheerful and deeply tanned brunette who grew up in a Carteret County commercial fishing family. On the boat trip to the island she tells me that though she grew up nearby, she never planned to stay. "As a kid, I thought this was the most boring place in the world." But after receiving her education, she found that she was profoundly rooted to the coast. "As an adult, I realized what a truly special place this is."

When the refuge manager job opened, she knew without a doubt it was the chance of a lifetime. Not only does she manage the third largest estuary in the southeastern United States, she is in charge of the wild herd of thirty-three ponies that call the reserve home.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HANK HEUSINKVELD

Though many call the ponies on the reserve "banker ponies," a colloquialism for the small feral horses of the Outer Banks, the horses on the Rachel Carson Reserve are crossbreeds of domestic horses and the wild banker ponies that inhabit nearby Shackleford Banks. Paula explains that though the horses on Shackleford Banks date back to the 16th century, the ponies on the reserve have only been here for little more than sixty years. A local resident, the late Dr. Luther Fulcher, introduced the horses to Carrot Island in the 1940s. She tells me that the "horses on the reserve are slightly larger than the small, stocky banker ponies." Genetic research revealed the horses' bloodline can be traced back to Spain, and the reserve's horses are distantly related to the herds on Shackleford Banks. "We don't know if the bankers were abandoned by Spanish explorers in the 17th century or if they swam ashore after a shipwreck," Paula says. I hold a small childlike hope that these horses are somehow related to Misty.

We're visiting the island at high tide on the new moon, so the water has submerged its small sandy beaches. Paula anchors the skiff and Hank and I wade to shore. "We might have to hunt for a while to find the herd today," Paula tells us. She explains that some of the horses' usual watering holes are likely flooded with the spring tide. And the horses can't drink salt water. Paula also tells us that the horses must dig for water on the sandy island. She describes the islands as having an underwater "lens" of fresh water that the horses can access. "It's nothing you or I would want to drink, but it's fine for them."

Signs posted along the shore remind people that the horses are wild animals. Dogs must be leashed so they don't disturb the wildlife, and also because one kick by a horse could easily kill. People are warned to stay more than fifty feet away from the horses. "And don't step between horses," Paula advises us, as that could cause aggressive behavior such as charging.

"Look!" says Hank. "There they are." We're standing on a small sandy hill. Below us is a wide expanse of marshland. In the distance, about 300 yards away, is a small herd of horses. Hank walks down and sets up his video camera while Paula gives me a quick primer on the horses as we watch the herd advance. There are eight horses in this herd, or harem: two males and six females. There's an alpha male, who will mate with the females, and a beta male, who helps protect the harem. Their movements are languorous; the horses gently sway as they walk. They are smaller than their domesticated counterparts, but make no mistake, they are still enormously powerful animals. I suddenly feel very small.

I wonder aloud if the mares are pregnant, since the animals' bellies are swollen and large. Paula explains that the horses' diet of salty marsh grass is the reason for their bloated appearance. "The mares receive contraception once a year, through a remote injection." This is done to keep the herd size on the reserve manageable, about thirty, and to ensure the health of the horses. Twenty years ago the herd grew too large; several horses died, and many were malnourished. "But other than the contraception, we treat these horses as wild." They weather the storms, the floods, the swelter of the August sun, and the occasional snowstorm. They sustain themselves on the spartina or cordgrass that seems in near limitless supply.

The herd is nothing short of majestic. As the harem ventures closer, the alpha stallion stations himself off to the side and the mares pass about seventy feet from where Paula and I stand. Now that they are close, I see their manes are long and ropy, equine dreadlocks, salt-laden and knotty. I raise my camera to take a few photos for several minutes while the mares head to

their watering hole. "Amazing!" I say to Paula, and turn my head back to see the alpha stallion has ventured uncomfortably close. He makes a loud chuff, and I look slightly to the side, scared if I look directly at him, he'll perceive me as hostile.

"Hold still," Paula says. We stand close together, and I hope we look small and nonthreatening to the stallion. My backpack is about thirty feet in front of me, and Paula wonders if that's caught his eye. I want to ask her what I should do if the stallion charges us, but realistically, I realize if a wild stallion charges you from fifty feet, your options are all bad. We are uninvited guests on this stallion's sovereign domain, and his proximity and boldness remind us of our place.

The stallion walks a few steps closer and stops. He slowly turns his head to look to where Hank is standing with his video camera, about fifty yards away, and then turns to follow his harem. To say I am relieved is an understatement.

We watch the horses dig and drink in the distance. Then, a third stallion emerges and approaches the watering hole. Paula explains that this lone male interloper was once the alpha male. He approaches, drinks for a moment, and moves toward one of the females. The beta stallion quickly maneuvers alongside the interloper. At first, it appears that the stallions are nuzzling each other, but in seconds they are each rearing up, teeth bared, snorting and whinnying. Finally, the lone stallion cries out, then retreats for a minute or two. He tries to approach the mares twice more until the beta stallion charges him and the two race across the marsh for a good half mile.

It's hard not to feel bad for the interloper. "What will happen to him?" I ask Paula. "Will he form another harem?" She tells me no. This horse is a permanent outcast. He will no longer be welcome in the social group. I wonder if he's sad. It's easy to romanticize the horses or anthropomorphize them by giving them names and ascribing human thoughts and emotions to them. But really, what do we know of any animal's mind and heart and soul? Most people are like me, I suspect. We look at the lone horse, cast out, and feel sad, because we know what it is to be lonely. Yet the horses' social structure is there for a reason. If they are to remain a wild herd, it's best to accept that and not intrude.

We've been on the island for three hours, and we hurry back to the skiff, before the ebb tide leaves the boat beached on a sandbar. I pause for a bit to let Hank and Paula get ahead of me, then I turn back to take one last look at the herd and the lone stallion. Their wildness is fostered on these islands, and seems likely to be maintained for its own sake, for future generations. It is a rare and splendid thing.

Want to visit?

The island is only accessible by boat and has no shelter or services. Bring water, bug spray, sunscreen, hat and food. Learn more about the reserve and the horses here: www.nccoastalreserve.net/web/crp/rachel-carson
Motor boats can launch from the Wildlife Ramp at 2370 Lennoxville Road in Beaufort. Canoes and kayaks can be launched from designated areas along the Beaufort waterfront.
Island Ferry Adventures also runs trips to the reserve. Information: (252) 728-7555 or www.islandferryadventures.com

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the Creative Writing Department at UNC Wilmington. She is also ACA certified Level 3 Coastal Kayak Instructor and guides part time with Kayak Carolina.

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Fragility

For Kristofer

There were too many eggs to eat, and
already too many chickens to keep them
and let them hatch. I was eleven, maybe ten.

We followed her through the creaky gate
swinging tin pails back and
forth, the way that children do.

Frightened of snakes, we carefully reached
into hay-lined holes, warm
as a mother's breath,
collecting all that they contained.

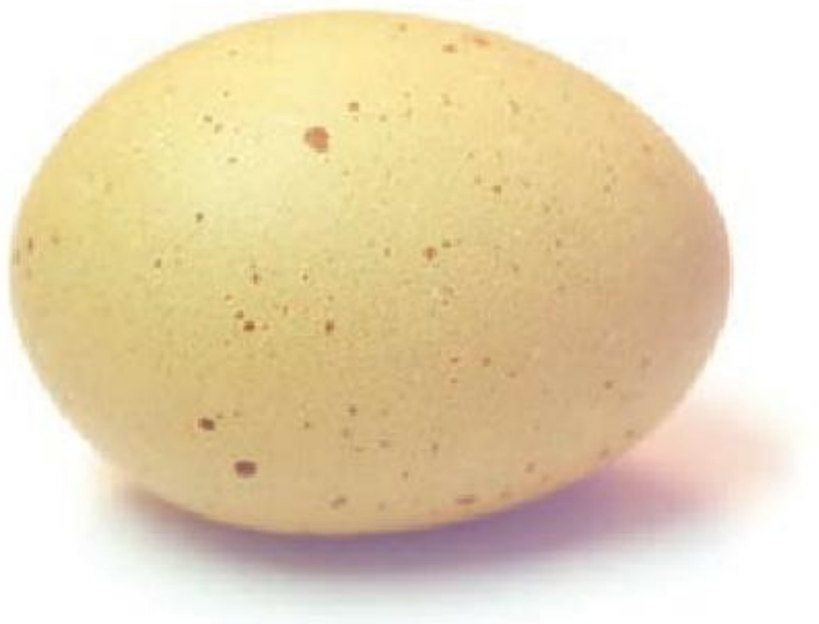
"Even chickens like chicken," she said
as we threw the fragile ovals
and watched their yellow goo splatter
in the dirt, in the pasture.

I thought it cruel to watch
as they pecked and gobbled
up their own — but I still threw
until one thumped to reveal
the gray and blue lump
it once concealed.

"Don't throw any more," she said
as we rushed over
to see it, to see through its
translucent skin —
to see what we had done.

I could hear the goats and sheep
bleat, but all I could see
was a fast-beating heart, fading
like an evening
like a whisper
like a firefly
trapped in a jar.

– *Ashley Wahl*



Bands on the Run

By Jamie Lynn Miller

Photographs by Brownie Harris

Serving up everything from surfer-boy rockabilly to hard-core blues jams, country folk to Indie punk, Wilmington's ever-expanding music scene plays to packed houses nightly and offers perhaps the most diverse variety of live music in the Carolinas — a distinction not lost on most of the great bands on the run — and rise — in the Port City. Stick around for the set list in downtown clubs and beachfront bars and you'll hear some of the most original talent anywhere.

No Dollar Shoes: The Good Ol' Boys Next Door

Drop by the back patio of Goat and Compass on a hot summer night for a No Dollar Shoes show and you'll see why this high-energy foursome has established something of a cult following here in Wilmington. Twin brothers Carson and Jesse Jewel and "The Benjamins" (aka Benji Smith and Ben Privott) know how to work a crowd. And with their slow, easy smiles (and great hair), it's obvious why these beachcomber boys are so popular with the ladies. (Ask them how many women have tripped over their speakers during a show and they'll tell you they've lost count.)

Jesse and Carson "Cars" Jewel, 31, started singing and playing guitars together when they were 17 years old. Music, they say, is in their blood. (Granddad, 92, is a retired singer, Uncle Kelly owns Ted's Fun on the River, and Cassius, Jesse's 2-year-old son, reportedly plays a mean kazoo.)

The twins first heard Greensboro native Benji Smith playing upright bass in a bluegrass band called Grandpa Wood and the Wood Pile.

"When we were 18, Cars and I used to sneak into bars to hear them play. We snagged up Benji 'cause he was the best bass player in town," says Jesse. Then he makes a playful, brotherly dig at Smith, implying that he was — but no longer is — the best. "But we like him, so we keep him around."

"Thanks, man," Smith says with a laugh. He and Privott also moonlight as The Benjamins — an upright bass and piano duo — Thursday nights at the Blind Elephant, Wilmington's newest speakeasy.

Jesse writes most of the lyrics. His so-called "Sad Old Bastard" songs come from his ability to empathize with others. "I like to picture myself in the shoes of those less fortunate," says Jesse, admitting that he's had an extraordinarily blessed and happy life.

The No Dollar Shoes sound continues to evolve: a little bit folk, heavy Americana, the occasional dose of rock and cowpunk (country punk), and, of course, those incredible harmonies. "The good thing about having so many original songs is that your music doesn't sound like anyone else's," says Jesse.

Lucky us.

No Dollar Shoes released their debut album, Extra Medium, in 2011. (Allegedly, the twins are a perfect size XM — "Hanes needs to come out with a T-shirt.") Their sophomore album, *Unfettered*, comes out this spring. In the meantime, there's always room for one more fan on the dance floor.

Randy McQuay: Mover and Shaker

Beside the beer cozies and CDs at the merch table is a stack of business cards upon which a 4-year-old Randy McQuay is crooning into an especially prophetic Christmas present: his very first microphone.

McQuay has been part of the Wilmington music scene since the late '90s. He is storyteller, bluesman, virtuoso of modern American roots music. He is the real deal.

Regardless of whether McQuay is performing crowd-pleasing blues jams for a packed house or an intimate gig for a near-empty room, his spirit and sincerity never dull. His vocals, which call to mind the head-turning timbre of Martin Sexton, complement his gritty instrumental sound in a way that truly stirs the soul. "People play music for all the wrong reasons," says McQuay. "They play for drinks, or girls — but are you willing to put in ten thousand hours? People are born with talent, but they need to nurture that talent."

While studying music at UNCW, McQuay became a percussionist with the Wilmington Symphony. "I saw how we moved an audience," says the musician. "I also saw Bob Dylan move people with one song, as one man." After five albums with the RootSoul Project, McQuay has been on solo leave since 2012, making a name for himself as singer/songwriter and producer. Ultimately, he's getting back to his roots. "I've wanted to push myself again, to play to bigger crowds as one person . . . and still have it be danceable. It's good to really captivate an audience that way."

This past winter, McQuay produced the first annual Port City Christmas Jam CD, a collaborative charity release featuring some of the town's finest musical talents. When he's not touring around the region, he's gigging around town. Find him on Tuesday nights at Duck and Dive Pub. And when he's scheduled to play at The Rusty Nail, a favorite local blues haunt, his wailing harmonica is a house specialty.

"I feel really good about what I do," says McQuay. "I feel blessed every day."

Justin Fox: The Renaissance Rock Star

It's after-hours at Tony's Guitars on Wrightsville Avenue, and Justin Fox is exercising the inventory. He reaches into a hollowed-out quartzite on the front counter, grabs a guitar pick, then starts strumming a '79 Gibson Strat, one of the shop's top-shelf consignment guitars. Fox's raw, piercing vocals cut through the stillness, rendering him instant Rock Star. His listeners lean in closer, close their eyes.

After winning a blues competition in Garner, North Carolina, at age 14, Fox was courted by a Wilmington-based management company. Within two years, he was touring the Virgin Islands with his dad on guitar and cousin Jeremy on drums. It was there that Fox discovered The Black Crowes, whose music moved him in a new direction. The talented young bluesman returned to the states to pursue rock and roll.

Well-known as the charismatic frontman of rock band Medusa Stone (through four albums and seven years of high-energy tours), Fox, 29, has become more of a solo artist, channeling the muse through the Justin Fox Duo/Trio.

In 2009, fate dealt Fox a hard blow. "I can't talk about my music and leave this part out. I had just gotten engaged, my career was going well and I was like, way high up in the sky. Then my brother died. And it just kind of changed everything for me. I took a couple months' break . . . and I just started writing songs. Through that tragedy, I learned to write therapeutically."

Producer and friend Worth Weaver got Fox back into the studio and Medusa Stone recorded his largely autobiographical album, *Live Your Life*.

While Medusa Stone is still an entity, Fox enjoys being what he calls a "musical chameleon."

"I like it all. I'm a music addict of the worst kind, you know? And I realized, I've got to get back to my own stuff, what I feel has no boundaries musically. I'm really enjoying playing acoustic shows because I can close my eyes and just feel what I'm doing. It's intimate; and at the same time, it can be energetic."

Loose Jets: The Inspired

It's a typical Sunday night. From the outside, 801 Greenfield Street looks deserted. Inside, however, Pyramid Rehearsal Studio is a virtual nightclub.

Loose Jets is having band practice.

As the hard rock rhythms of drummer Chuck Spry shake the walls, a ceramic parrot clings to its perch above the carpeted sound stage, and red and green lights dance in small, dizzying circles across vintage concert flyers and frayed posters, including one of Rolling Stones bad boy Keith Richards.

"This is our man cave," says James Sardone, who founded Loose Jets with "Rock and Roller" Chad Heye in 2012. Talents include Spry (drums), Sardone (guitar/vocals), Heye (guitar), Kent Hobson (bass), Will Ammons (keyboard), and — yes — raven-haired bombshell Addie Wuensch (lead vocals).

"People's reaction to me fronting a rock band?" asks Wuensch, whose sultry voice and commanding stage presence leave a lasting impression. "Well . . . people are surprised."

For Wuensch, a painter and jewelry designer (check out her work at Bottega Art & Wine), art inspires poetry. Her poetry shines through in the song lyrics.

"One of the great things is when everybody's influences collide," says Heye of Loose Jet's collaborative song-writing process. "We'll thrust things in the center of the ring and hash it out . . . 'Go, go, go, stop. Here it is — boom!'"

Despite busy lives and steady jobs, the Loose Jets take their music-making seriously.

"We work hard," says Sardone. "We believe that if we work hard and stay focused, something good will happen."

Fodder for the masses includes an EP on iTunes, videos on YouTube, and a Loose Jets fan page on Facebook. Stay tuned for the band's first full-length album.

Mike Adams: Mr. Good Company

In Castle Hayne, just seven miles outside of Wilmington ("way out in the country"), 61-year-old Mike Adams counts his blessings. Then he sings about them.

"I am the luckiest man," says Adams. "The kids turned out all right . . . the grandkids come to visit. It's just a really nice life."

Adams grew up watching his older sister perform Joan Baez songs at a little steakhouse in Wrightsville Beach. She'd let him sing harmony. "Boy, I was so in love with her," Adams says. Her heartfelt vocal style is what inspired him to pick up the guitar. He wanted to be part of the magic.

After decades away from making music (about ten years ago), Adams got back to what's always moved him.

He plays at least six instruments, including ukulele, guitar, bass, upright bass, blues and clawhammer banjo. Most of his songs are about love, family and "how much I love my world," says Adams.

A regular at Ted's Fun on the River, Adams often plays alongside his neighbor, singer Jean Puskus, and sometimes shares the mic with his wife, Stephanie. Perhaps you've heard him playing upright bass in the "kind of jazzy" Sparkle Brothers or the bluegrass-turned-Americana-esque band End of the Line. Ted's 7–9 p.m. performance schedule allows him to make music with his friends, then get back to strumming on his own back porch.

"Periodically, I have taken the notion that I was gonna start playing a solo act . . . but it's just not that much fun being up there by yourself, " Adams says. "I love the back porch where everybody's got a guitar and everyone sings harmony, and the lady comes walkin' out of the house with a hot dog and stops and starts singing along to the song because she knows it . . . that's much better than the critical examination, the worryin' and frettin' part of music."

Currently, Adams is working on a songwriting project called "27 Tunes." His hope is to feature several of the "great musicians in town" to help bring his original compositions to life. "It's a way to make people come together and play more music," he says. He lowers his voice, almost conspiratorially: "All I can tell you is that when it's done, in the bottom right corner, it'll say 'All Songs by Mike Adams.' But you'll need a magnifying glass to see it.'"

To hear music and more from these talented local musicians, visit Sonic Byways with Jamie Lynn at www.jamielynn.podbean.com.

The Fiery Angel

For gifted violinist Danijela Zezelj-Gualdi, battling for her music was the road to personal salvation

By Anne Barnhill • Photographs by Mark Steelman

When Danijela Zezelj-Gualdi was 16 years old, she, along with her 10-year-old sister, Lara, fled their homeland, Croatia, to become refugees in Munich, Germany. They traveled alone, sneaking out of the country, carrying very little with them. "We did not want to call attention to ourselves," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

It was 1991 and the Serbo-Croatian conflict had grown more and more dangerous. What had begun as a movement for independence had slowly evolved into a violent civil war.

"In 1991, when the barricades came up and the conflict escalated between Serbia and Croatia, our parents thought it best to get us out of the country," says Zezelj-Gualdi, who is currently a violin soloist, as well as a teacher of violin and viola at UNCW.

At an age when most Americans teenagers see getting a driver's license as their big rite of passage, Zezelj-Gualdi was settling into a small apartment in Munich with her host family, along with three other refugees. She'd been torn from her loved ones and the blissful life she had known living along the coast of the peaceful Adriatic Sea, where, at age 11, she had been the youngest member of the Zadar Chamber Orchestra.

"It was very crowded in the little apartment. My sister and I slept on an air mattress on the floor. Our hosts were wonderful, but still, it was an unsettling time," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Her parents had remained in Croatia; they were reluctant to leave behind all they had worked to achieve. They told their daughters the separation would be temporary; it would last only until things calmed down.

"About one month after we arrived in Munich, the phones to Croatia were cut off — we then had no contact with our parents," says Zezelj-Gualdi. Now fully responsible for herself and her younger sister, Zezelj-Gualdi tried to make things as normal as possible. And that meant returning to school.

"When I mentioned the idea of us going to school, our host family was not interested in helping us do that. They had a lot going on and setting it up for us would have been difficult," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Faced with the possibility of not returning to school, young Danijela made a surprising decision:

"I took my sister and we ran away. We went into Serbia to stay with our grandparents. We were now living in enemy territory."

While their daughters tried to solve the problems facing them as refugees, their parents had troubles of their own.

"Dad was called to serve in the Croatian Army. He is a non-violent man, so he and my mother escaped to Slovenia across the Austria-Hungary border, then on into Serbia," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Things went from bad to worse.

The family lived with the grandparents for a year while her father tried to find work. The girls were able to return to school, but things were definitely not the same. Money was scarce.

"Serbia was blamed for the conflict and the rest of the world sealed Serbia off with sanctions. This caused a deep recession — there was no food. When you went to the grocery store, the shelves were empty," she says.

Making do with second-hand textbooks and used clothing was difficult. Zezelj-Gualdi couldn't stand the idea of her little sister carrying used books in a used book bag, so she took what little money she had and bought Lara a new book bag. But she could do nothing for the feelings of alienation the whole family felt.

"We moved from one little shack to another — we didn't belong to Croatia and we didn't belong to Serbia. People didn't welcome us. We didn't feel accepted."

However, the one thing that offered relief for Zezelj-Gualdi was music. She'd been playing the violin since age 10. She was talented, so talented that when she graduated from high school, she entered the music conservatory.

"If you have the ability, you are allowed to go on to school. Only one in ten who applies to the music conservatory is accepted," says Zezelj-Gualdi. "I was one."

Not only does Zezelj-Gualdi play with the passion of a fiery angel, her edgy beauty adds to the performance, her slender body so in sync with the violin, one is not sure whether she is playing the violin or the violin is playing her.

Once she began studying at the conservatory, Zezelj-Gualdi finally felt at home.

"I thrived on my music. I practiced more than I ate or slept. Practice was the one way I could get out of this hell," she says with a little smile. Her brown eyes hold a hint of lingering sadness.

Eventually, Zezelj-Gualdi graduated from the conservatory and made it into the Belgrade Philharmonic. This enabled her to perform all over Europe. The conductor of the orchestra was from Norway and he was everything she admired: talented, handsome, a man of the world. He invited her to go with him to Vienna for a month. She accepted. They were to be there

for one month only, playing music together. However, while she was there, the Serbian borders closed once more. Zezelj-Gualdi was yet again separated from her family and home. She continued to stay with the Norwegian conductor and, predictably, they fell in love. She abandoned her own studies and did administrative work for him.

"I was 23 and deeply in love," says Zezelj-Gualdi. "I did not know it at the time, but during my absence from home, my parents had sent a tape of me playing the violin to the U.S. with some friends from Pittsburgh who had come to visit. These friends took the tape home with them and gave it to several colleges in the U.S. I had no idea."

As another year passed, the romance was waning. Zezelj-Gualdi got a call from her sister, informing her that Zezelj-Guildi had been accepted into three American colleges.

"I was so excited. I chose Carnegie Mellon. I was supposed to pass an English test in order to come. I was very worried about it because I knew I could not spell. However, I did speak English and I talked them into allowing me to speak rather than write. I passed the test," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Breaking off her relationship with the Norwegian conductor and with his blessing, Zezelj-Gualdi began yet another new life in another new land. But this time, it was different. She was thrilled.

"I had not played music for a year. When I was in my first violin lesson, I began to cry — I was so happy to be playing again," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

While studying at Carnegie Mellon, she had the opportunity to study and perform with top-notch musicians.

"The level of musicianship was incredible . . . and also scary. I was always looking up to my colleagues — and I was always last chair," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Like a fish returning to water, Zezelj-Gualdi finally felt she was at home. After earning her undergraduate and master's degrees, she was not yet ready to leave the United States.

"I wanted more time in the States and I hoped, perhaps, to teach," says Zezelj-Gualdi. While at Carnegie Mellon, she'd met a young pianist, Paulo Andre Gualdi, from Italy. He was not yet ready to leave the States, either.

"When I first met Paulo, he didn't like me. But slowly we became friends. I got a scholarship to pursue my doctorate at the University of Georgia. Paulo decided to do the same. We eventually married and now we have a 3-year-old daughter, Julia," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Before the birth of their child, the couple performed all over the world. However, having a small child makes such travel difficult.

"I love playing solo and performing, but I also like the balance I have now of teaching and performing. I'm very happy to be playing with the Balkan Quartet. We play modern music that tips its hat to the Eastern European traditions," says Zezelj-Gualdi. The Balkan Quartet has just made its first CD.

And, though her life must seem idyllic compared with her earlier experiences, there are still challenges for Zezelj-Gualdi.

"My husband teaches at Francis Marion [University] in Florence, South Carolina. He has an apartment there and I have one here in Wilmington. Julia stays with me most of the time and we meet on weekends. This is very difficult. I would like for us to be together. It is very hard to balance motherhood with being a performer, plus have a long-distance marriage," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Though having a child makes life more complicated, Zezelj-Gualdi has discovered a plus to teaching at UNCW.

"I've learned that students make great babysitters," she says with a laugh.

As her professional life continues to shift and expand, Zezelj-Gualdi has become open to exploring various sides of the music industry. She's considering pursuing the business side of performance.

"I want to be excellent, to be the best at what I do. I think I'm at the top of my game right now. This is it. But when I'm 50, then what? The classical world suffers from the recession as much as any other industry — music is often the first to go during hard times," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Perhaps her early life experience has enabled her to be flexible and realistic in her approach to life. Yet, beneath the practical exterior beats the heart of a true musician, one who has the ability to transport the listener to a deeper, better place; one who can touch the spirit. To do this, a musician must be able to pour herself into the music.

"The violin is an instrument that grows out of me, an extension. What I could not say with words, I could so freely express through my playing. I touch other people. It is my other way of expressing myself. I have had so much suffering and pain — the music is healing," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Early in her career, Zezelj-Gualdi preferred the Romantic composers. Now she enjoys modern and contemporary music.

"I'm very into modern music — it seems more real to me, closer to me than Romantic music, which is from the past. I love composers like Philip Glass and Peter Vasko," says Zezelj-Gualdi.

Most recently, she played a concert by a contemporary Chinese composer, based on Chinese legends. She said the pieces were very strange and descriptive of the legends themselves. This summer, she will return to Croatia to solo with the symphony there.

"I started ballet at age 4. I am very comfortable on stage. I am not shy! Being on stage is wonderful. I like to get the attention, and I like to do it with style," she says.

Hear Zezelj-Gualdi play on her website at www.dzgviolin.com or www.balkanquartet.com.

Anne Barnhill is the author of four books and a poetry chapbook. Her latest novel, Queen Elizabeth's Daughter, *is now available at local bookshops.*

The Whistler's Secret

Music that comes from his heart to the city's streets

Story & Photographs by Mark Holmberg

Perhaps you could call him a Whistlin' Mother.

At 78, Darrell Andrew Taylor — "The Whistle Man" — certainly has a set of lungs on him. Perhaps you've heard him walking the sidewalks in downtown Wilmington, whistling up a storm — loud enough to hear inside, two or three floors up, windows closed.

"I'm going to the store, why just walk?" he asks, holding a smoldering cut-rate cigarette in his long fingers. "I can listen to some music."

Music that comes right out of him — out of his heart, through his mouth.

"I enjoy it," he says with a twinkle in his somewhat watery eyes, "because I know someone is listening."

How can you not listen? It's whistling! Lyrical, soulful, bluesy, breezy and . . . loud.

You might wonder, how does he get all that whistle out of his slim, 6-foot-1-inch body crowned by a grey mist of hair that seemingly could be blown away, like a dandelion.

How he does it is a mild topic of conversation among some of the old-timers who sit outside the sweet Cape Fear Hotel Apartments downtown on nice days, sunning like turtles. The Whistle Man — they call him Andrew — lives on the fourth floor.

"He's got something in his mouth," one says.

"Really?" says another.

"I've seen it."

"It's a secret," the Whistle Man says with an inscrutable look that would make Whistler's Mother proud.

Then he laughs through his cigarette smoke and tells a bit of his story.

As it turns out, his secret is 70 years old and one of his earliest memories growing up in segregated Wilmington. "Someone showed me, I don't remember who."

You take the top of a tin can (he explains as he holds out the secret in his weathered hand), fold it over just so and poke a hole in a precise location. Then you have to learn how to hold it in your mouth.

And, of course, you need an ear, a heart, for music.

"I know a lot of music from over of the years," he says. "If I know it, I can blow it."

But for much of his grown-up life, he didn't whistle like that.

Soon after graduating from old Williston High — the historic African-American school named after a button and suspender magnate — young Andrew joined the Air Force and eventually served as a mechanic on B-52 bombers.

After getting out, he worked most of his life as a welder and pipe fitter, he says from his worn chair beside his fourth floor window. There was a fairly brief stint in prison for a robbery charge he caught on impulse with a fellow former Airman.

No, he says, he wasn't whistling "in the can," even with that down time on his hands.

It wasn't until his retirement that whistling came to mind. He was at another retirement home where life centered around the horseshoe pit. Outdoors, with the relaxed pace of the game for those not playing, the secret from his youth came back to him.

And isn't that another secret — living long enough to remember to be young again?

So just how long is he going to keep on whistling?

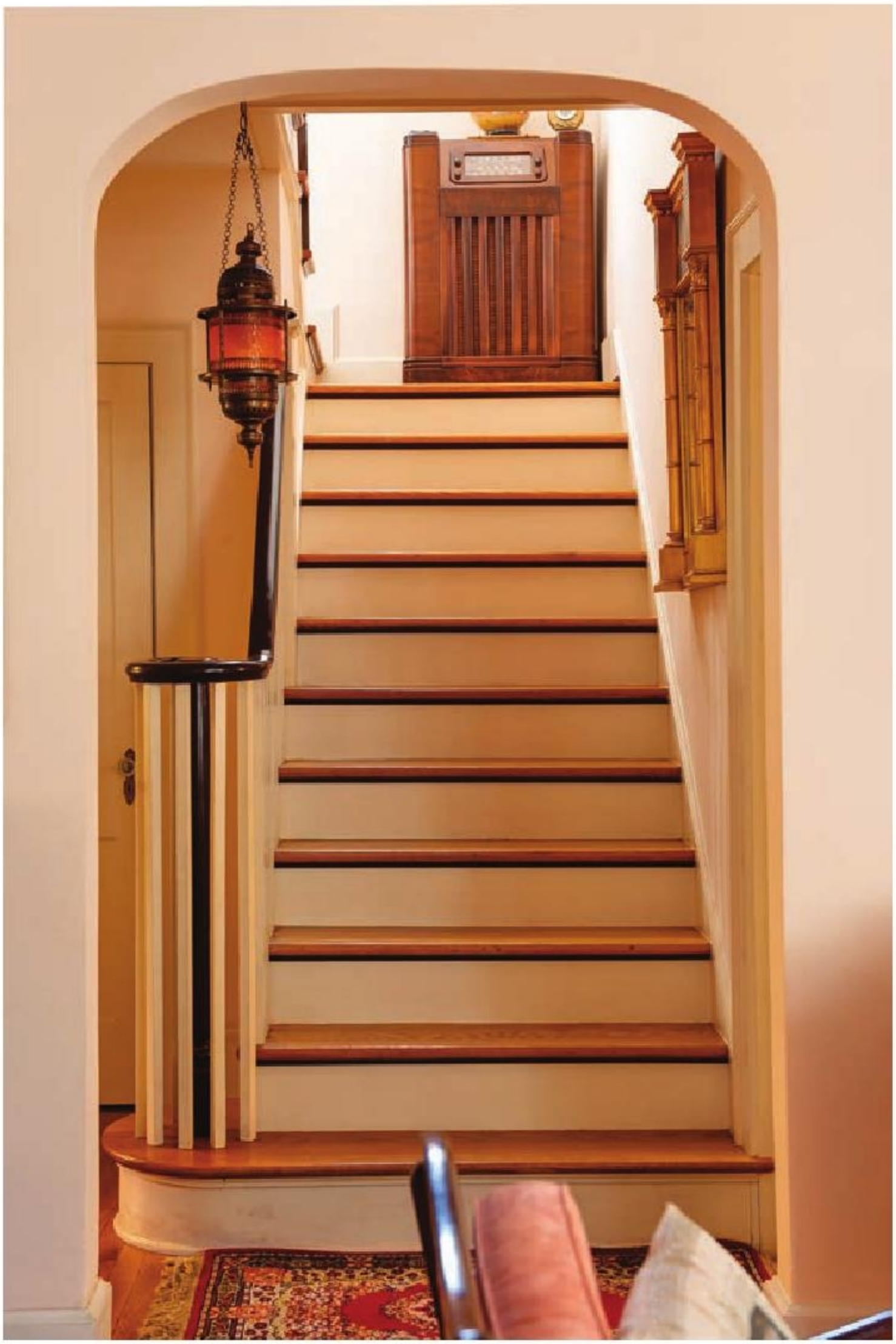
The Whistle Man laughs at the easy-to-answer question. "Until," he says, "St. Peter blows his whistle!"

Mark Holmberg, longtime reporter and columnist for CBS-6 in Richmond, Virginia, and the Richmond Times-Dispatch *(where he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary in 2003), is settling in and exploring Wilmington. He says he has fallen in love with the Port City.*

Past Perfect

Melissa Corbett's splendidly updated garden and Brookwood home
– a star stop on this spring's Azalea Garden Tour
– bear sweet reverence for lives well lived and hearts at rest

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi



Nothing is finished, nothing is perfect, and nothing lasts forever. Melissa Corbett knows this variety of life. So when she agreed to let the Cape Fear Garden Club add 111 Brookwood Avenue to the 2014 Azalea Garden Tour, she decided to keep her sense of humor.

She kept it when ice storms threatened farfugiums and bonsai wisteria. She kept it when hungry squirrels plucked the buds from the Lady Banks rose vines. And she'll keep it, whether or not the coral bells bloom in tandem with the pink ruffle azaleas. Most people won't know the difference anyhow.

Similarly, most visitors won't know that the dreamy garden behind the ficus-covered brick bungalow was so overrun by creepers when Melissa Corbett first saw it that grapes were spilling over into the neighbors' yards.

"I could have entered the tubers into some kind of contest," she says.

But the camellias — one of which displays four different types of blooms — were like divine gifts, and Corbett would discover that the berries on the towering holly tree draw migratory cedar waxwings to her backyard each year.

When Corbett moved into the historic Brookwood neighborhood, she inherited the ghost of a once splendid garden. She didn't have a grand vision for it. She didn't even have a hand pruner. But here, for some reason, Corbett developed an interest in gardening. Working around mature trees and shrubs, she gradually created a secret garden filled with fragrant and exquisite cultivars: English hawthorn, snapdragons, tea olives and violas.

"A lot of plants died along the way," she says.

Nothing is finished, nothing is perfect, and nothing lasts. Except, perhaps, the past. The past is never dead, wrote William Faulkner. In the garden, as new growth blossoms, the old grounds are born again. Same goes for the house.

Corbett never was a Belle. She didn't wear satin or carry a parasol. She grew up on nearby Country Club Road — just over a mile from her Brookwood home — where childhood meant chasing boys and threatening to spray them with dimestore perfume. On Sundays, her father took Melissa and her siblings to Airlie gardens, the seaside oasis that had once belonged to her grandparents, Walter and Bertha Barefoot Corbett. Melissa remembers holding hands with her siblings as they tried to wrap their arms around the massive, 400-year-old Airlie oak. When the children were old enough for summer road trips, the Corbetts visited the West Coast, Canada and Mexico. Later, they flew to Africa, Europe and South America.

Each new adventure expanded Corbett's horizons. She developed a yen for travel, and an urge to get away from home.

"I was ready to leave," she says.

After studying hotel, restaurant and travel administration at the University of Massachusetts, Corbett moved to London in 1985 to attend Le Cordon Bleu culinary school and wound up starting a catering business there. The hours were long and the work was exhausting, but Corbett fell in love with the historic city on the River Thames and with its arts and customs. Still, her itch to travel persisted. Finding work as a private chef, she spent time in over fifty countries, including memorable stints in Austrailia, France and Japan, each of which boasts world-renowned cuisines. When she came home in 1996, she was tired, but she was ready for a new project. Something a little slower-paced.

"I wanted to fix up a house," says Corbett.

And so she did.

This was before Corbett met her future husband, before they had their daughter, Lillian, now 9, and, of course, before the divorce (recent and amicable).

She found a 1934 Tudor with a gable-end roof and an arched, pedimented porch in center bay. From the outside, the house was quaint — even charming. But it needed new life.

"I liked the feel of it," she remembers, even if there was a resident ghost.

As she took down doors, removed old radiators, stripped layer after layer of Art Deco linoleum from the kitchen floor, she sometimes felt like she wasn't alone.

"I think it was Mr. Roland," Corbett says. "I think he was just seeing what I was going to do with the house."

The Brown House, as it's known, was built in 1934 for an Atlantic Coast Line Railroad clerk named Charles and his wife, Mary. Perida and Herrick M. Roland bought the house from the Browns in 1938. Herrick, who was superintendent of schools, must have loved to garden, says Corbett from her seat in the back room the Rolands added when Herrick became handicapped. Once a bedroom with shag carpet, it's now a sunny den with gleaming cherry floors, clerestory windows and back doors that open out to a curved deck with a vine-covered pergola roof.

Herrick's widow, was 96 years old when she sold the house to Corbett. She came back to see it when she was 98. Before she made it up the walkway, she asked, "Where's my mailbox?"

Beyond the red door with the metal mail slot, Perida barely recognized some of the rooms. In the kitchen, the roll-around dishwasher had been replaced. The walls were lighter, fresher, festooned with art — from aboriginal dot paintings to grand portraits done in oil. Although Corbett made very few structural changes, through Perida's eyes, the house was obscured by her memories of nearly sixty years there.

For Corbett, the house is more like a memory box. In the living room: antique yumu and cypress horseshoe chairs from Hong Kong, an inlaid backgammon set from Morocco, 1920s-era cane back sofa and chaise, and two framed sections of Chinese hand-painted wallpaper salvaged from the long-gone Airlie Mansion. The furniture doesn't match, and the art is an eclectic mix of estate sale treasures and mementos from world travels. The house is not unlike the garden of an exotic plant hunter — cuttings from hither and yon

planted beside family heirlooms. And like the garden, the house is completely transformed. Nothing is finished, nothing is perfect, and when something lasts, like floral-patterned upholstery or an outdated appliance, it stays.

Sans doors, the house has a circular flow, the stairwell with the cherry balustrade serving as the central axis. Living room leads to formal dining room. Formal dining room leads to breakfast nook-turned-pantry. Pantry leads to kitchen. Kitchen leads to utility room (formerly a screened-in porch). Utility room, which boasts a Mediterranean-style tile floor, connects to the den.

In the study, located between the living room and the den, is the wooden table at which Corbett's maternal grandmother, Josie Belle Hart King, worked as a postmaster in McBee, South Carolina.

"She couldn't get rid of anything," says Corbett. When Gran Josie Belle died, Corbett and her mother, Joanne, spent three months sifting through her belongings. "She had the largest rubber band collection you've ever seen," says Corbett, recalling her grandma's Depression-era mindset and how she used to cut broccoli bands in half to double her stock. Corbett took her share of the furnishings, displayed and used throughout the house.

"My grandmother went crazy for red spray paint," says Corbett. "You would not believe how many pieces of furniture I had stripped."

On the stairwell, among the black and white photographs of Grandma and Grandpa Corbett, both of whom died before Melissa was born, is a photo of Josie Belle dressed head-to-toe in bright, bold red.

"She was a natural redhead," says Corbett. When she was young, somebody told her that people with red hair could not wear red. Perhaps as an homage to her past, Corbett has several red accents throughout, including the living room mantel.

The console radio on the landing belonged to mother Joanne. Occasionally, it plays music from the '30s and '40s without being prompted. Corbett shares a story about the time her ex-husband finally believed her when she blamed it on a resident ghost.

Upstairs, the home's "half-story" includes two beds, one bath. The master bedroom, done in soft peach, is filled with stately furniture from Singapore and England. Dainty curtains dress the windows of the rosy dressing parlor. The view: a stately oak shading the front lawn.

The room with the sock monkeys and plastic jewelry and three-story Barbie Dreamhouse is where Lillian blooms. Her collection of dolls — several of which belonged to Lillian's mother — are seated side-by-side on a plush gray sofa.

"She loves all her babies," says Corbett, including androgynous Charlie and a blind Shirley Temple.

Often, when Mom is in the garden, Lillian looks for bugs, plays with Emily (rescue mutt), or creates tiny fairy worlds.

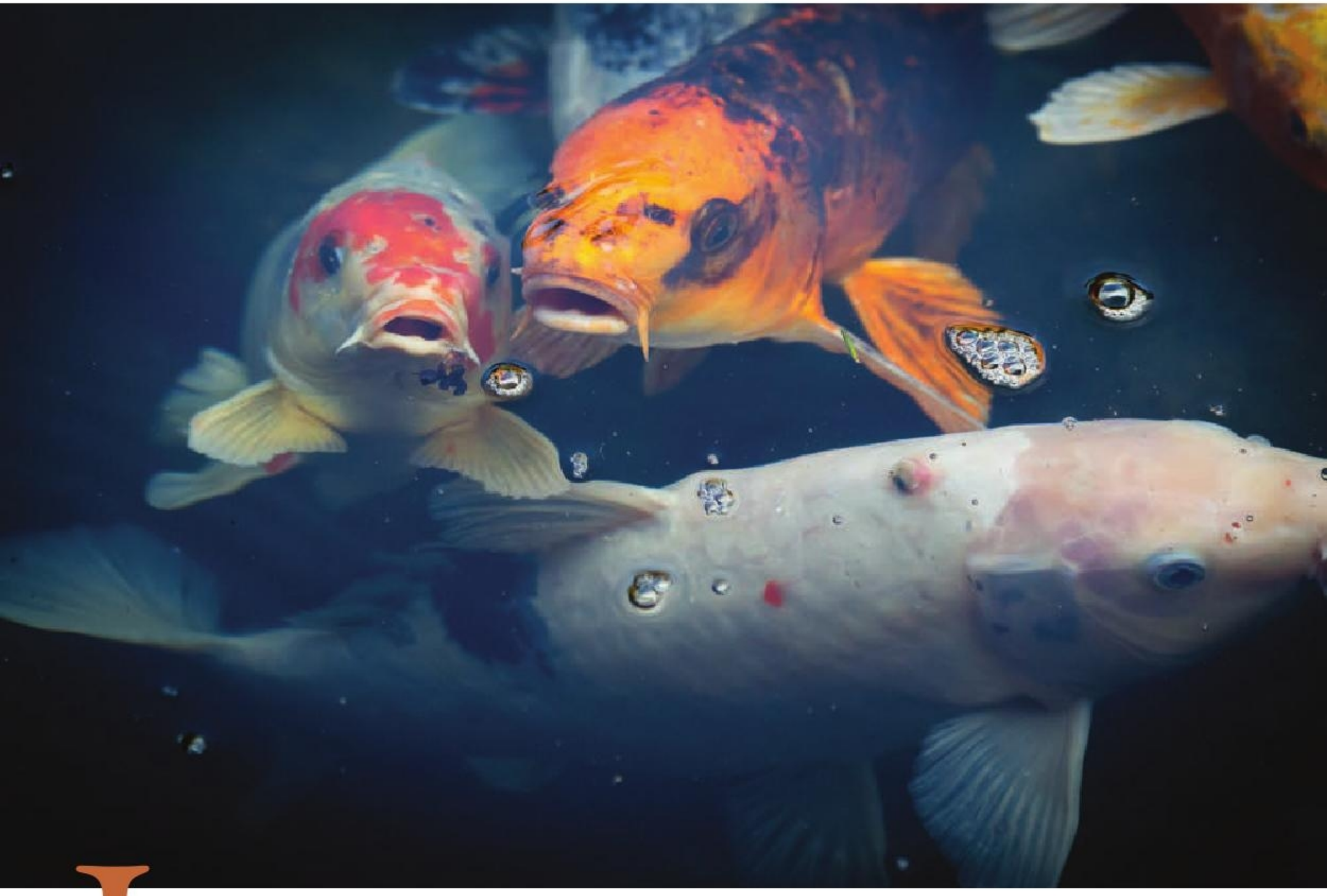
Visit the garden this month and meet Corbett's own whimsical cast of characters, including a mannequin posed as a nosey neighbor, and a life-size Andy Warhol planted somewhere only the overly curious will spot. And if you happen to see the ghost of Mr. Roland, be sure to tell him how nice the old camellias look.

The annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour will take place April 11–13. Both 111 Brookwood Avenue and Airlie Gardens will be among the featured gardens. For tickets and information, visit www.capefeargardenclub.org.

The Garden Life

For a visionary couple inspired by the flora of a mythic Indonesian island, grew a garden of uncommon serenity and beauty

By Barbara J. Sullivan · Photographs by Mark Steelman



If you lived on the island of Bali in the Indonesian archipelago and you had a small garden plot, say three-fourths of an acre to play with, you'd have a lot of things going for you. You'd be planting in an equatorial climate where the widest annual temperature fluctuation would be between 77 and 91 degrees Fahrenheit. You'd be spoiled rotten in terms of dirt. Imagine running your fingers through rich, volcanic soil—a soft, fluffy, black treasure-trove of organic matter with enough sponginess to hold water but with a texture that never stays soggy. You could choose exotic plants like coconut palms, banyan trees, bougainvillea and those showy beauties we in colder climates call "florist's" hibiscus. You could create a small tropical paradise with the sweet scents of frangipani, tamarind and Arabian jasmine blowing through your open windows on a soft evening breeze.

Or, if your hometown happened to be Wilmington, North Carolina, over 10,000 miles away, you could come back from a trip to Bali so deeply inspired by the lush beauty of the island vegetation that you would create your very own version of a Balinese tropical paradise right next door. After falling in love with the island, its gardens and its people, this is just what Wilmingtonians Alison and

Don Getz did. Remarkably, in spite of the differences in climate, soil, growing conditions and choices of plant material, they succeeded beautifully.

Turtle Hall, a tract of about one-hundred acres off Greenville Loop Road, just a few miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean, was once home to a plantation house, guest house, stables, riding ring and servants' quarters. Alison Getz, a Wilmington native, has a very special relationship with the place. In the 1960s her family purchased the property. She and her young friends had the good fortune to ride horses through the surrounding woods, following unmarked trails through native pines and oaks. Eventually the acreage was sold and developed into a quiet, leafy neighborhood of winding streets and upscale homes. In 1997, she and her husband, Don, bought property there and built a house. In 2000, when the three-quarter-acre vacant lot next door came up for sale they bought that as well. It was this vacant lot that was destined to be transformed in ways only a visionary couple could imagine.

Don and Alison knew they wanted a Balinese-style guest house with a courtyard garden where "the outside could come inside." They wanted a central water feature that could be viewed from inside the house, and they wanted a feeling of privacy which they would create with walls on three sides of the garden and a thick tapestry of foliage along the fourth side. The garden would be mostly evergreen so even in winter it would have a lush, tropical feeling. Don, the avid gardener of the couple, calls the lovely, jungle-like abundance a result of "contrived carelessness."

The project was a joint enterprise from the outset. Alison worked to recreate an Indonesian aesthetic in the guest house, incorporating bamboo, Brazilian cherry and floor-to-ceiling windows, which allow natural light to wash the room softly. Traditional wall hangings depicting Balinese dancers, bird paintings from the great art center of Ubud and other island touches lend a sense of the exotic.

Don honchoed the garden design and installation, working with the owner of a local hardscaping company, Doug McGraw, to design a three-foot waterfall and fish pond fully visible from the guest house living area. Together they mapped out gentle, winding paths, chose climate-friendly plants, and imagined unique vistas from each spot in the garden.

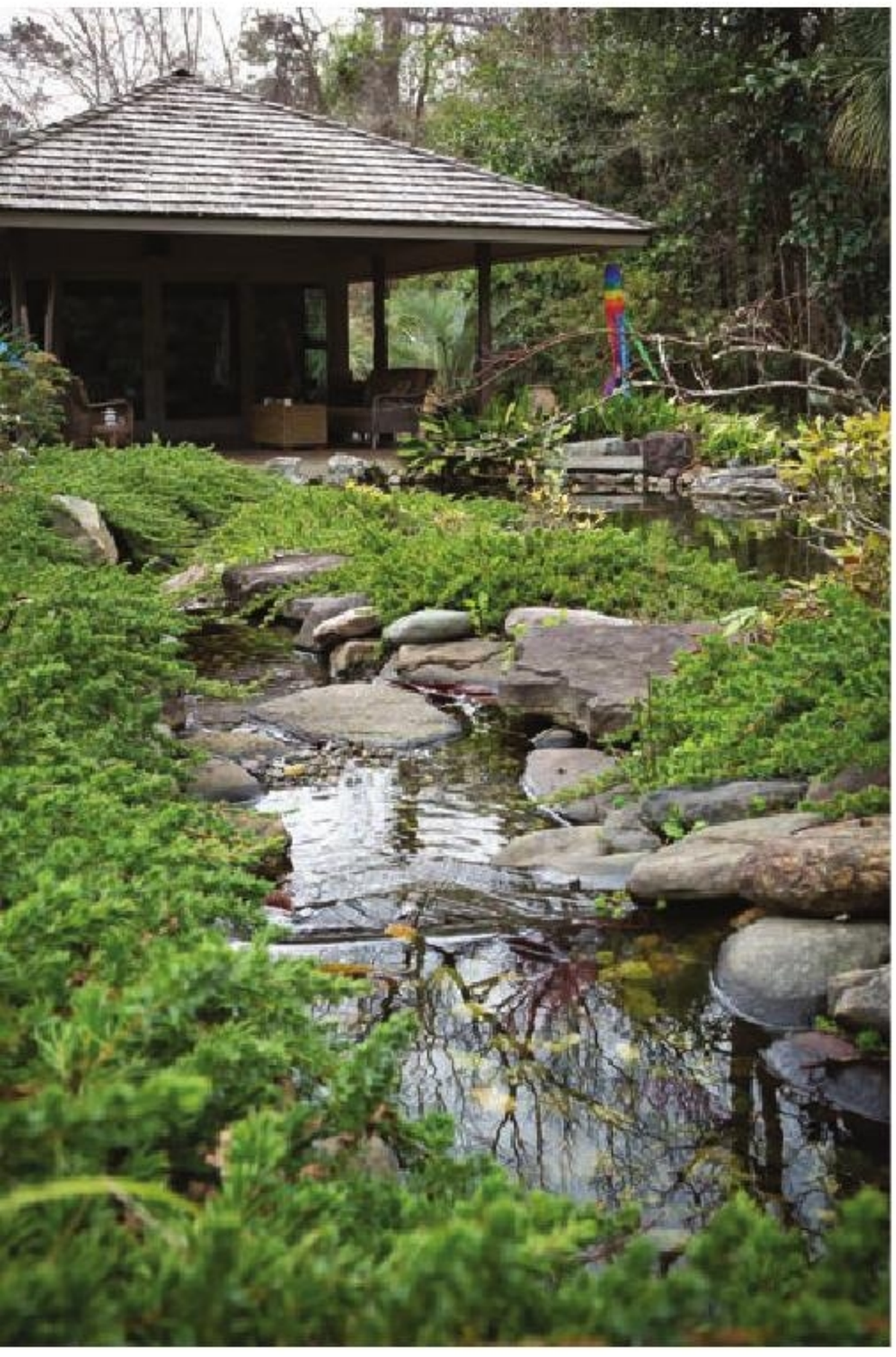
Right from the start, Don was a realist. "I have only one theory of gardening," he says. "Darwinian theory. Stick something in the ground. If it lives, leave it. If it doesn't, pull it out." More than one uncooperative plant has been sent to the compost pile. In addition to creating a sense of serenity, peace and natural harmony, the Getzes knew they wanted low maintenance. And, over time, the garden has grown to meet all of those requirements. This was no easy task.

Gardening in Wilmington is nothing like gardening in Bali. Temperatures can range anywhere from zero degrees (a low recorded in 1952) to 104 degrees (recorded in 1989) with an average relative humidity between 85–90 percent in the summer months. The coastal soil tends to be sandy with a meager supply of nutrients and poor water retention. Extreme high temperatures rule out plant choices just as readily as do freezing temperatures. Working within these parameters, the Getzes created the lush, tropical effect they were after by choosing plants that thrive in the temperate Zone 8 climate. Native cabbage palms, no more than eight feet tall when they were planted, have grown to a regal thirty feet. The exuberant, arcing fronds of Butia palm add drama next to the cascading waterfall. Mediterranean fan palms neatly frame the approach to the covered outdoor sitting area.

Evergreen trees and shrubs, although they don't stand out as dramatically as the showier palms, form the heart and soul of the garden. Magnolias, camellias, loquats, pittosporum and fatsias have been arranged artfully so they create bays, coves, nooks and secret spots which invite the visitor to explore, sit and linger.

And, of course, the garden wouldn't have that truly Balinese flavor without bamboo, a plant which grows prolifically throughout the Indonesian islands. In order to keep their many clumps of bamboo from spreading wildly via underground runners, the Getzes have confined the plants in sturdy cement containers — a smart strategy.

Apart from the careful choice of plant material and effortless effect created



by the overall design, what a visitor might notice in the garden is a general sense of peace and calm. This feeling of spiritual tranquility is enhanced, in part, by the dozens of bronze, stone and wooden sculptures set into wall niches, tucked into leafy corners, or, as in the case of the spectacular two-and-a-half-foot tall bronze Buddha head from Bangkok which sits atop the waterfall, used as focal points to draw the visitor's eye through the space. In this unique way, the Getzes have populated the garden with beneficial spirits who look after their guests. What might be simply a peaceful green backdrop becomes a refuge from the hustle and bustle of the world, a sanctuary from the intensity of 21st century life. From trips to Thailand, Cambodia, Taiwan, Indonesia and other parts of Asia where Don, an orthopedic surgeon, has often traveled on medical mission trips, the couple has brought back these remarkable sculptures and friezes. Deities and humans co-exist here: the peace-loving Hindu god Vishnu, preserver and sustainer of life; the elephant-headed god Ganesh, remover of obstacles; the bronze statue of a Thai woman, her hands joined in a gesture of welcome; Guanyin, the Chinese goddess of mercy; and a pair of fierce-looking Balinese gate guardians, mythical beasts who ward off evil spirits. Around each corner is a new surprise.

What effect does all of this have on visitors? The leafy green canopy, the statues offering their blessings, the secret paths and fig-covered walls offering a sense of safety, seclusion and privacy — what magic do they work? Guests leave notes. They leave watercolor sketches. They throw coins in the fountain to ensure that they'll return one day. "This is a place for my soul to rest," writes one guest. "A much needed escape from the daily grind," writes another. "It can't help but make one look inward and find beauty and joy inside."

Don has written a poem for the Bali House guest quarters and garden and for all those who have the good fortune to visit it. This is how it begins: Now all ye who enter here/ Cast aside all care and fear/ For within, you will see/ A garden of serene harmony.

When you step through the gates of the Bali House you will, indeed, step into a world apart. This quiet, private sanctuary is a tribute to what two people with vision, inspiration and a strong dose of willpower and common sense can do. Wilmington may not be a place where monkeys scramble through flaming Poinciana trees or coconuts fall from ninety-foot palms, but it is home to its own hidden and quite extraordinary version of paradise.

The Bali House garden will be featured during the annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour April 11–13. For tickets and information, visit www.capefeargardenclub.org.

Barbara Sullivan is the author of Garden Perennials for the Coastal South. *Her downtown Wilmington garden has been featured on the PBS show* Garden Smart.

ALMANAC

APRIL

By Noah Salt

The Almanac Gardener politely begs to differ with Mr. Eliot on the subject of April, the month he claimed to be the cruelest of months for daring to mix memory with desire, watering dull roots with spring rain. We frankly like the sudden downpours, fancy the smell of a waking and deeply drinking Earth; we happily note the daffodils' last stand and the deepest hue of fading tulips, the azaleas and dogwoods in full cry, the first scent of honeysuckle in bloom. Though even modern man must render his tax to the king come April, the longer light makes life far more tolerable than the crazy mood swings of March, softened by steeplechase picnics and rusty golf rounds and garden tours for the botanically covetous; and simple evening walks about the neighborhood that make us pause, breathe deeply, and finally — exhale.

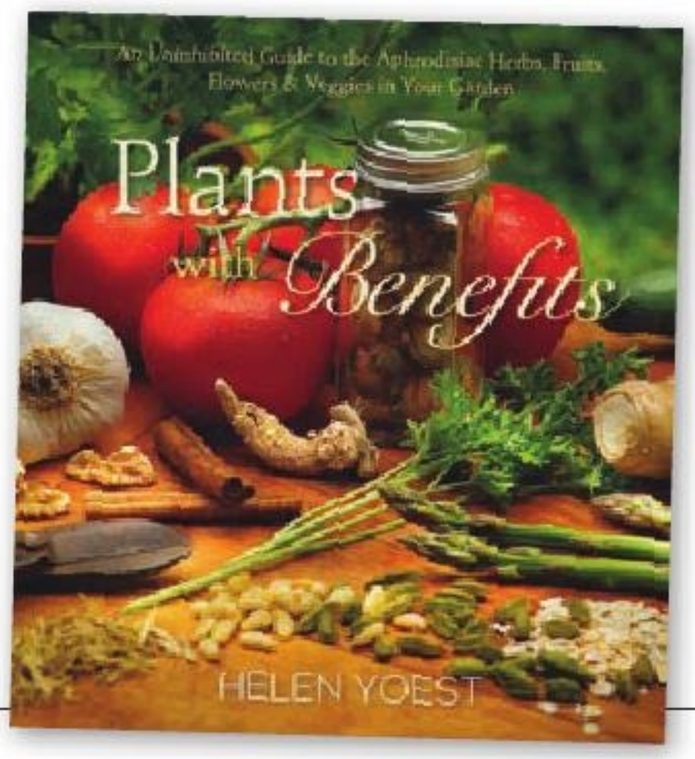
The Origin of Rainbows

An ancient Anglo-Celtic tradition holds that April 26 is the day that the waters of the Great Flood mentioned in the Book of Genesis began to abate, bringing Noah's ark to rest on the slopes of Mt. Ararat. From *Shepherd's Prognostication*, 1729: "When thou seest in the morning a rainbow, it betokeneth Rain, and a great Boisterous Storm. When it doth appear at three or four in the afternoon, it betokeneth Fair Weather and a Strong Dew; when at the going down of the Sun, then for the most part doth it Thunder and Rain. When it appeareth in the East, then followeth Fair Weather; or when in the North, Fair Weather and Clear."

One last bit of ancient rainbowology: "When thou seest a rainbow, bow to it, for it is God's token between Him and Mankind. But to point at it is Very unlucky."

Nice Pair of Avocados You've Got There

One of our favorite garden writers, Raleigh's Helen Yoest, has a delightful new book with a provocative twist — detailing the secret sex life and aphrodisiacal properties of ordinary herbs, flowers, fruits and veggies from your garden. In *Plants With Benefits* (St. Lynns Press, $17.95), Yoest leads readers on a lusty caprice through the ages and the garden. Did you know, for instance, that ginger root is not only a superb digestive aid (Confucious was never without his), but according to an 11th century Persian physician "heightens lustful thoughts," the reason the famed medieval medical school at Salerno prescribed ginger to aging gentlemen who lost, ahem, their sexual vigor. "Eat ginger and you will love and be loved as in your youth," Yoest cites an ancient prescription hundreds of years before Cialis had lovers sitting in separate bathtubs. "I didn't start out to write a botanical Kama Sutra," notes the author in her introduction. "I am a gardener. I write about designing gardens that are in harmony with nature. When I see a plant, I want to know what it does, which of my senses it will satisfy." With a playful yet scholarly eye to botanical history, cultural lore and ancient medicine, Yoest takes us on a merry romp through her garden, finding something to love — or just improve love — from almonds to watermelon, with growing tips and terrific accompanying recipes. Who knew that our favorite spice, cinnamon, was mentioned in the *Song of Solomon* and used to spice up the bedchamber in ancient days? My advice: Pour yourself a nice glass of ginger beer and enjoy.



The Green Man Cometh

Hidden in the walls of many old churches and cathedrals can be found a strange figure, the mysterious face of a man surrounded by vines and leaves — it is the Green Man. Its original meaning has been lost in time, though some speculate the signature of individual stone masons depicting the mood or mindset of their creator — reflecting a vast array of emotions ranging from simple mirth to sinister warning. Some Green Men were depicted as tricksters in the leaves, others as wild creatures meant to ward off evil spirits. In medieval times, no garden wall or residence was complete without a resident Green Man, often regarded as a symbol of rebirth and the garden's presiding spirit. April, the queen mother of rebirth months, is the ideal time to go hunting for the Green Man, who is enjoying a popular resurgence that has his foliate face turning up on everything from plant urns to garden gates.

April 2014

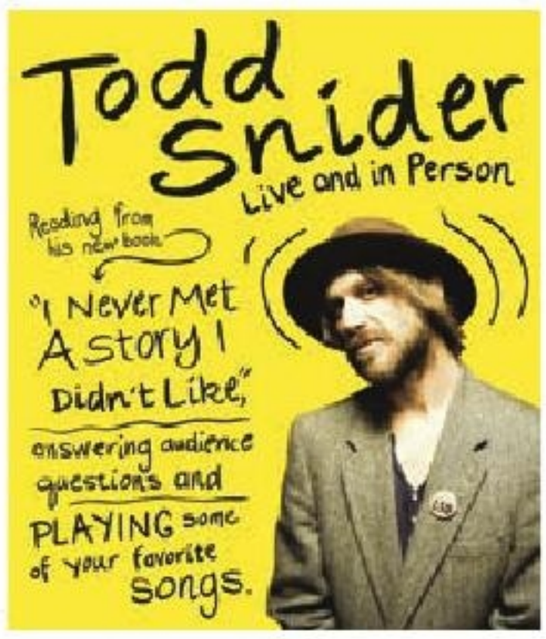
Arts Calendar

Guitar Virtuoso Concert

4/4

Cinematique Film

4/14-16


Todd Snider
Live and in Person
Reading from his new book
"I Never Met A Story I Didn't Like,"
answering audience questions and
PLAYING some of your favorite songs.

Todd Snider to the BAC

4/24

4/1–2 Cinematique Film

7 p.m. *The Invisible Woman*. Multilayered portrait of Charles Dickens, his young mistress and the nineteenth century Victorian society in which they carried out their secret affair. Directed by and starring Ralph Fiennes with Felicity Jones and Kristin Scott Thomas. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632.2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

4/1–7 Bellamy Art Show

10 a .m. – 5 p.m. (Tuesday–Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). An exploration of the ways the Bellamy site has been represented in art over many decades by numerous great artists. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

4/2 Breakfast for Children's Champions

7:30 a.m. Fundraiser/celebration honoring individuals in the community that provide exceptional service to young children. Features a Dr. Seuss-themed breakfast and guest speaker Clyde Edgerton. Proceeds benefit Smart Start of New Hanover County. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sunrunner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 815-373 or www.newhanoverkids.org.

4/3 Umphrey's McGee in Concert

6 p.m. Chicago-based band Umphrey's McGee are masters of the improvised, experimental rock jam. Admission: $25–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheather, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (251) 300-3150 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

4/3 Jazz at the CAM

6:30–8 p.m. The Cape Fear Jazz Orchestra 16-piece ensemble will perform repertory and contemporary works under the direction of Grammy-nominated Jerald Shynett. Admission: $5–12. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/3 Shakespeare Club Film

7 p.m. *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare's comedy of gender confusion, in which a girl disguises herself as a man to be near the count she adores, only to be pursued by the woman he loves. Directed by Trevor Nunn, starring Helena Bonham Carter, Richard Grant and Imogen Stubbs. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/3 Moscow Festival Ballet

8 p.m. Wilmington Concert Association presents *Cinderella*, performed by the Moscow Festival Ballet to the music of Prokofiev. Admission: $18/student; $43/adult. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonconcert.com/ballet--cinderella.

4/3 Wine, Women & Shoes

6:30–10:30 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring wine from some of the country's top winemakers, live runway show, auction, raffle and multi-vendor marketplace. Admission: $85. Proceeds benefit Make-A-Wish Eastern North Carolina. UNCW Burney Center, 609 Union Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-1375 or www.winewomenandshoes.com/wilmington.

4/3–6 Jewish Film Festival

7:30 p.m. (Thursday); 8 p.m. (Saturday); 3:30 p.m. & 7 p.m. (Sunday). Three-day film festival in association with the United Jewish Appeal of Wilmington featuring three dramas and a biographical documentary offering unique perspectives on Jewish identity, rituals and history as well as life in Israel. Admission: $10–18. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.facebook.com/wilmingtonjewishfilmfestival.

4/3–6 Live Theater

7 p.m. Thalian Association Children's Theater presents *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, a homage to the characters of Charles Schulz presented as an ordinary day in the life of our favorite down-trodden hero, set to music by Clark Gesner and Andrew Lippa. Admission: $12. Hannah Block Second Street Stage, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

4/3–6 Fashion Weekend

7 p.m. (Thursday & Friday); 11 a.m. (Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Four-day event highlighting emerging designers, fashion and local boutiques. Features an opening night Cirque Du Soleil social, four runway shows, an emerging designers competition, trunk show, awards show and block party. See website for itinerary and participating venues. Info: (910) 319-3272 or www.wilmingtonfashionweekend.com.

4/3–6 Live Theater

8 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). UNCW Department of Theatre presents *Ubu Rex*, David Copelin's translation of *Ubu Roi* by Alfred Jarry. Featuring Shakespearean scatological humor and farce, this translation takes stabs at literature, politics, and the ruling classes with careful efforts to relate to the modern audience. Admission: $5–12. UNCW Cultural Arts Building, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/theatre.

4/4 Guitar Virtuoso Concert

8 p.m. Six virtuoso guitarists from four countries. Combining the California Trio's steel strings with the Montreal Trio's nylon strings, the two groups collaborate to create infectious arrangements that fuse progressive rock with world, jazz and classical music. Admission: $18–35. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

4/4 Golf Tournament

12 p.m. Semi-annual golf tournament/fundraiser for Big Dawg Productions includes 18 holes of golf, awards dinner with live music and putting contests. Admission: $100. Magnolia Greens Golf Course, 1800 Linkwood Circle, Leland. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org/events--cape-fear-playhouse.

4/4 Children's Art Contest

5 p.m. North Carolina Azalea Festival Children's Art Contest opening reception. Ribbon cutting with Mayor Bill Saffo and Azalea Belles. Art on display through Sunday, April 13. Hannah Block Historic USO Community Arts center,120 South Second Street. Info: www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

4/4–5 Dinner Theater

7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Celia Rivenbark's *Rude Bitches Make Me Tired*, a slightly profane and entirely logical answer to modern etiquette dilemmas. Adapted by Zach Hanner. Admission: $20–36. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

4/5 Nature Program

1 p.m. Cape Fear Museum presents "Learning Center: Incredible Insects," which offers a "bug's eye view" of the world and investigates how bugs communicate and why they dance. Admission: $4–7. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4362 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

4/5 Star Party

7:30–10 p.m. Public star gazing session with the Cape Fear Astronomy Society to kick off the North Carolina Science Festival. Features a focus on moon viewing, moondances, moon-phaser building and mini-shows by the Cape fear Museum's starlab planetarium. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach State Park, 1010 State Park Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 798-4362 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

4/5 Live Music

8 p.m. Progressive Music Group and Wilmington Unplugged present Jim Avett with Sean Thomas Gerard. Avett's shows are a combination of beloved country tunes, original ballads and the stories he tells to introduce them while Gerard's catchy-yet-haunting tunes are chock full of dreamy lyrics and clever observations that will stick with you for days. Admission: $10–15. Manna, 123 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 352-6417 or www.wilmingtonunplugged.com.

4/5 March for Babies

10 a.m. Scenic 3-mile walk/fundraiser. Proceeds benefit March of Dimes research and care. Hugh MacRae Park, South College Road and Lake Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 452-1515 or www.marchforbabies.org.

4/5 Education Open House

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Community-wide open house of Cape Fear Community College campuses features tours, educational exhibits, demonstrations, seminars, lectures and children's activities. Admission: Free. CFCC Wilmington Campus, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington; CFCC North Campus, 4500 Blue Clay Road, Castle Hayne; CFCC Burgaw Center, 100 East Industrial Drive, Burgaw. Info: (910) 362-7020 or www.cfcc.edu/openhouse.

4/5 Island of Lights Fashion Show

11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Fundraiser/luncheon featuring a live fashion show by Touché, Unique Boutique and CB Surf Shop, lunch catered by Middle of the Island, silent auction, raffle and spring hat contest. Admission: $25. Proceeds support holiday events sponsored by the Island of Lights. American Legion Post 129, 1500 Bridge Barrier Road, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 617-5945 or www.islandoflights.org/fashionshow.

4/5 CFCC Boat Show

9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Annual celebration of the craft of boat building presented by the CFCC boat building programs features exhibits, self-guided workshop tours, student displays, interactive demonstrations, kid's activities and a wide variety of wooden and fiberglass boats, kayaks and skiffs. Proceeds provide scholarship funding for students in CFCC's boat building programs. North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7403 or www.cfcc.edu/martech/boatshow.

4/5 Azalea Festival 10k/5k

8 a.m. Fifth anniversary 10k, 5k and one-mile race hosted by the Cape Fear Volunteer Center as part of the annual NC Azalea Festival. Kids, dogs and costumes welcome. Admission: $30–35. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Volunteer Center Big Buddy Program. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-8180 or www.azaleafestivalbigbuddy5k.com.

4/5 Superhero 5k

8 a.m. Annual 5k and one-mile certified race features face painting, balloon animals, costume contest, food and kid-friendly activities. Admission: $25–30. Proceeds benefit abused and neglected children. River Landing, 116 Paddle Wheel Drive, Wallace. Info: (910) 665-9870 or www.superhero5krace.org.

4/5 Walk a Mile in Her Shoes

8 a.m. Men, women and children wear high heels and take to the streets of downtown Wilmington to protest gender violence in the community and show solidarity with survivors. Includes music, refreshments, raffle prizes and costumes. Admission: $15–20. Proceeds benefit the Rape Crisis Center of Coastal Horizons Center, Inc. Elijah's Restaurant, 2 Ann Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-6936 or supportrcc.org/walk-a-mile-in-her-shoesreg.

4/5 Metropolitan Opera

1–4:30 p.m. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents *La Boheme*, Puccini's classic story of young love and the most performed opera in Met history. Starring Anita Hartig and Vittorio Grigolo. Admission: $15–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/lumina.

4/5 Dodgeball Shootout

8:30 a.m. Thirty ten-player teams square off for the honor of hosting the Patches O'Houllihan Championship Cup. Tournament is open to all businesses, schools, clubs and civic groups; team uniforms are encouraged. Admission: $500. Proceeds benefit the Cape Fear Council Boy Scouts of America. Courts and Sports, 3525 Lancelot Lane, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-1100 or courts-sports.com.

4/6 Chorale Concert

4 p.m. Cape Fear Chorale presents Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, an oratorio for soloists, orchestra and double choir, conducted by Jerry Cribbs. Pre-concert talk at 3:40 p.m. with Dr. Michael Daugherty. Admission: Free. Ashley High School Minnie Evans Arts Center, 605 Halyburton Memorial Parkway, Wilmington. Info: (910) 233-0156 or www.capefearchorale.org.

4/6 Bill Cosby Live

7 p.m. Legendary comedian Bill Cosby brings his "Far From Finished" tour to Brunswick Community College. Admission: $67–77. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Supply. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

4/6 Music at First Concert

5 p.m. Domomique Launey (piano) and daughter Molly Hines (violin) perform the music of Beethoven, Bach, Sibelius and more. Admission: Free. First Presbyterian Church, 125 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6688 or www.firstonthird.org.

4/6 Meet the Composer

7:30 p.m. Chamber Music Wilmington presents Eric Gould. Gould has a lively compositional style and the ability to combine classical techniques with a fresh jazz sound. Admission: $26. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.chambermusicwilmington.org.

4/6 & 13 WikiWorkshop

9:45 a.m. A time to address the hardest questions in life during a gathering of the Anchor Church. Hell's Kitchen, 118 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 524-5676 or anchorwilmington.org/wikiworship.

4/7 Golf Tournament & Games Day

11 a.m. Golf tournament featuring a four-person shamble format plus a chance to play duplicate bridge, party bridge, mahjongg, pinochle and Mexican train, bid on silent auction items and enjoy a meal at the clubhouse. Proceeds benefit the Good Shepherd Center. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sunrunner Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-4424 or www.goodshepherdwilmington.org.

4/7–8 Nature Program

10 a.m. Kids ages 2–5 can discover nature through stories, songs, hands-on activities, hikes and crafts. This week's theme: "Signs of Spring." Admission: $3. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/7–9 Cinematique Film

7 p.m. *The Past*. Ahmad returns to Paris to finalize a divorce with his estranged wife of four years so that she can remarry only to discover the conflicting relationship between her and their daughter. In an attempt to improve their relationship, he ends up unveiling a secret from their past. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632.2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

4/8 Branford Marsalis in Concert

7 p.m. Grammy-winning saxophonist and Tony Award-nominee Branford Marsalis has played with everyone from Miles Davis to Sting and the Grateful Dead. An NEA Jazz Master, Tony award nominee and former leader of Jay Leno's Tonight Show Band, he continues to exercise and expand his skills as a musician, composer and head of Marsalis Music. Admission: $5–30. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/presents.

4/9 Azalea Festival Coronation

5 p.m. Annual ceremony held to officially crown the queen of the NC Azalea Festival and introduce the festival party with celebrity guests, city officials, board members and Azalea Belles. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org.

4/9 Live Music

8 p.m. Progressive Music Group presents Mishka with Sarah Blacker live. Mishka's music is Caribbean at the core, yet has an eclectic sound that contains many elements and genres from bass-heavy roots reggae to mellow acoustic ballads; songs of love, songs of social justice and consciousness. Blackner's heartfelt songwriting, coined "dundress rock," fuses folk, rock and Americana. Admission: $14–16. Ziggy's By the Sea, 208 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 769-4096 or ziggysbythesea.com/events/mishka.

4/10 Hootenanny at Bellamy

6:30–7:30 p.m. Local musicians Susan Savia, Catesby Jones, Mark Teachey, Eric Miller and Alex Lanier join John Golden for an evening of roots, folk and classic alfresco tunes. Wine, beer and snacks available for purchase. Bellamy Mansion Museum, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

4/10 Live Music

9 p.m. Wilmington Unplugged presents Rayland Baxter in a solo performance playing his storybook songs on the intimate unplugged stage. Admission: $10–15. Manna, 127 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 352-6417 or www.wilmingtonunplugged.com.

4/10 Birding by Bike

8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Birding by bike with Gary Shell on the Cross-City Trail. Bring your bike and helmet. Admission: Free. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/10 Justin Moore in Concert

8 p.m. Country music concert featuring headliner Justin Moore accompanied by Randy Houser and Josh Thompson. Admission: $31.50. Miller Lite Main Stage, Cape Fear Community College, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/off-the-beaten-path.

4/10 Survivor Breakfast

8 a.m. Community breakfast featuring guest speaker and 9/11 survivor Joe Dittmar offer-

ing a first-hand account of his escape and highlighting the events, memories and lessons learned on the day of the attack. Admission: $20. Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Bolivia. Info: (910) 755-7473 or www.brunswickcc.edu.

4/10–13 Cole Bros. Circus

4:30 & 7:30 p.m. (Thursday and Friday); 1:30, 4:30, & 7:30 p.m. (Saturday); 1:30 & 4:30 p.m. (Sunday). World's largest circus under the big top featuring an international cast of circus stars and a tent-full of educated exotic animals. Highlights include the world's funniest horse, a white tiger act, high-wire act, motorcycle stunts, and a human cannonball. Admission: $20/child & senior; $25. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Boulevard, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/circus-2014.

4/11–12Widespread Panic in Concert

8 p.m. The Azalea Festival welcomes southern rock band Widespread Panic to the stage for two nights. Admission: $60/each; $120/both. Miller Lite Main Stage, Cape Fear Community College, 411 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/widespread-panic.

4/11–13 Azalea Art Show & Sale

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Annual juried art show presented by the Wilmington Art Association featuring fine art for sale by more than 150 local and national artists, amateur and professional. This year's show includes metal, ceramic, glass, wood, paper, mixed media, three-dimensional works and award-winning artist and educator, Bob Rankin, as juror. Admission: Free. Hannah Block Community Arts Center, 120 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-4370 or www.wilmington-art.org.

4/11–13 Spring Plant Sale

9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 12–5 p.m. (Sunday). Annual spring plant sale featuring plants grown by members of the Hobby Greenhouse Club. A portion of proceeds benefit scholarships for area community college horticulture students. Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

4/11–13 Azalea Garden Tour

10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Self-guided tour of thirteen local gardens sponsored by the Cape Fear Garden Club. Ribbon-cutting ceremony takes place at the Greenfield Lake Hugh Morton Amphitheater at 10 a.m. followed by the Queen's Garden Party at the adjacent Dr. Herber W. Johnson Rotary Garden. Admission: $25. Proceeds are distributed throughout the community as beautification and horticulture grants. Tickets/Info: (910) 742-0905 or www.capefeargardenclub.org/azalea-garden-tour.

4/11–13 Azalea Street Fair

6–10 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Free, family event featuring more than 200 arts and craft vendors, 40 food vendors, a children's area and live entertainment on four stages. Market Street and Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1465 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/street-fair-2014.

4/12 Spring Bird Watching

All day. Help the Coastal Plain Conservation Group establish a spring bird species list database. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/12 Chowder Cook-Off

11:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. Day-long celebration featuring a signature chowder cook-off, food vendors, games, face painting, kids' zone and live music by The Marks Roberts Band. Admission: $5. Carolina Beach Lake Park, 1121 North Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org/chowder-cook-off.

4/12 Backyard Birding

9:30–11:30 a.m. Workshop on backyard birding and bird feeding. Pre-registration required. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/12 Azalea Festival Parade

9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Festive procession through downtown Wilmington features floats, marching bands, clowns, horses, visiting celebrities, town officials and the Azalea Festival court. Admission is free along the route; bleacher seats may be purchased through the festival office. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/parade.

4/12 Oak Island Run

8 a.m. Half marathon, 10k and 5k run beginning and ending at Fort Caswell with a scenic route along the beachfront and past the Oak Island Lighthouse. Admission: $30–45. North Carolina Baptist Assembly, 100 Caswell Beach Road, Oak Island. Info: (910) 457-6964 or www.lighthouse10k.com.

4/12–13 Azalea Coin Show

10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Sunday). Family-friendly event featuring more than thirty dealers from surrounding states to appraise, buy, sell and trade coins, currency and other numismatic items. Children will receive free foreign coins. Admission: $1. American Legion Post 10, 702 Pine Grove Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/coin-show.

4/12–13 Azalea Boxing Tournament

2–6 p.m. Tournament showcases some of the finest boxers from the national and international level plus military branches. Includes six divisions and a master division. Sponsored by the NC Azalea Festival, Friends of Boxing and the NC Amateur Boxing Association. Admission: Free. Williston Middle School, 401 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 794-4650 or www.ncazaleafestival.org/events/boxing.

4/12–13 Azalea Historic Home Tour

1–6 p.m. (Saturday); 1–5 p.m. (Sunday). Historic Wilmington Foundation presents nine historic homes and one church that showcase the wide variety of architectural styles found in Wilmington. Ribbon-cutting ceremony takes place at the Neil M. McEachern House, Saturday, 12:30 p.m. Admission: $25–30. Proceeds benefit Historic Wilmington Foundation. Tickets/Info: www.historicwilmington.org.

4/13 Chamber Choir Concert

4 p.m. UNCW Chamber Choir performs under the direction of Joe Hickman. Admission: $5.35. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3415 or events.uncw.edu/MasterCalendar.

4/13 Kayaking Birding Tour

8–11:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird and Garden and Mahanaim Adventures for a morning of kayaking and bird watching around Masonboro Island. Admission: $45. Kayaking equipment and guide included. Reservations required. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/13 String Ensemble Concert

7:30 p.m. UNCW String Ensemble performs from the Baroque to modern periods under the direction of Dr. Steven Errante. Admission: $5.35. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3415 or events.uncw.edu/MasterCalendar.

4/14 UNCW Jazz Concert

7:30 p.m. UNCW Jazz Guitar Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble II (Little Big Band) perform under the direction of Bob Russell and Michael D'Angleo. The ensemble is compromised primarily of jazz students in the Department of Music. Admission: $5.35. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3415 or events.uncw.edu/MasterCalendar.

4/14–16 Cinematique Film

7 p.m. *Gloria*. Gloria is a "woman of a certain age" who fills her nights seeking love at social dance clubs for single adults, but her fragile happiness changes the day she meets Rodolfo. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632.2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

4/15 Art Show & Reception

6–9 p.m. "Dancing through my Blogosphere, A whirlwind trip through my visual blog, Chapter Two: Nature, the Killer App." Janette K. Hopper presents the second chapter of her current exhibition featuring original prints and paintings. Costello's Piano Bar, 211 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-9666 or costellospianobar.com.

4/15 Stephen Marley in Concert

6 p.m. Five-time Grammy award-winning Jamaican-American musician and producer performs songs from his new album, *The Fruit of Life*. Admission: $25. Greenfield Lake Amphitheather, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7855 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/event/Stephen-ragga-marley.

4/16 International Film

6:30 p.m. Documentary film *Up the Yangtze* follows a group of young people who find employment on a cruise ship near China's Three Gorges Dam, where they confront rising waters and a radically changing native land. Part of the International Film Series: Journey in Resilience. Admission: Free. Cameron Hall, Cape Fear Academy, 3900 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 791-0287 or www.capefearacademy.org.

4/17 Spring Eggventure

9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Annual spring event featuring animal eggs and nests activities, egglympics, storytime and a nature hike. Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/17 Bird Hike

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Two-mile hike and bird watching through the Holly Shelter Gamelands of the Coastal Plain Trail. Registration required. Admission: $10. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

4/17–20 Short Sketches

8 p.m. (Thursday–Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Big Dawg Productions presents *Motherhood Out Loud*, a series of short sketches and monologues exploring all facets of a family from adoption and surrogacy to gay parenting and stepmothers. Admission: $5–20. Cape Fear Playhouse, 613 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 367-5237 or www.bigdawgproductions.org.

4/18 Easter Carnival

10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Kid-friendly Easter egg hunt/carnival featuring continuous games and egg hunts along with a bounce house, petting zoo, pony rides, face painting and pictures with Buddy the Battleship Bunny. Admission: $5. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com/events.

4/18–20 Rims on the River

11 a.m. Tenth anniversary classic car and motorcycle show featuring live entertainment by Southern Culture on the Skids, The Woggles, The Straight Eights, The Meteor IV, the HellzaPoppin Circus Sideshow and the Globe of Death Motorcycle Stunt Riders. Admission: Free; $10 to exhibit. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: rimsontheriver.com.

4/19 Combat Mud Run

8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. 5k mud run with obstacles including fallen trees, a bungee hallway, tire climb, walls, mud and culvert crawls, swamp and trail running and a Meat Head Mile Extension for serious competitors. Admission: $35–50. Proceeds Benefit Step Up for Soldiers. National Guard, 2412 Infantry Road, Wilmington. Info: its-go-time.com/combat-mud-run-april-19.

4/19 Epic Day at GLA

7 p.m. Beer, music and art festival presented by Pipeline Events featuring unlimited sampling of R.A. Jeffrey's best microbrews from

16 high-end breweries, local art, food vendors and live music by The Dirty Heads, Fear Nuttin Band and Signal Fire. Admission: $35–50. Proceeds benefit Step Up for Soldiers. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-7855 or www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/event/epic-day.

4/19 Easter Egg Hunt

9:45 a.m. Easter egg hunt and puppet theater presented by the Little Chapel on the Boardwalk. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Town Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2819 or www.towb.org.

4/21–23 Cinematique Film

7 p.m. *Enemy*. Hypnotically surreal psychological thriller about the power of the subconscious when a man discovers an exact physical double of himself. Adapted from José Saramago's novel, starring Jake Gyllenhaal and directed by Academy Award nominee, Denis Villeneuve. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall Main Stage, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632.2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org.

4/23 Saxophone Concert

7:30 p.m. UNCW Saxophone Quintet and Saxophone Ensemble perform under the direction of Frank Bongiorno. The ensemble is composed of students with the Department of Music and across campus. Admission: $5.35. UNCW Beckwith Recital Hall, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3415 or events.uncw.edu/MasterCalendar.

4/23–27 Carolina Cup

10 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Wednesday); 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Thursday); 8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Friday); 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Series of SUP races in Wrightsville Beach hosted by the Wrightsville Beach Paddle Club includes the Harbor Island Recreational Race (3.5 miles), Money Island Open Race (6.5 miles) and Graveyard Elite Race (13.2 miles). The event also includes an expo, clinics, BBQ, and awards ceremony. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 616-9675 or www.wrightsvillebeachpaddleclub.com.

4/24 Anniversary Luncheon

12 p.m. WHQR's 30th anniversary luncheon features guest speaker Robert Siegel, NPR's award-winning journalist and longtime host of *All Things Considered*. Mr. Siegel will discuss the history of NPR and his most memorable moments followed by Q&A. Suggested donation: $100. Hilton Wilmington Riverside, 301 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: whqr.org.

4/24 Todd Snider Live

6:45 p.m. The Penguin presents Todd Snider with an acoustic set, movie screening, Q&A and a reading from his new book. Admission: $20–25. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-2939 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

4/24 Rita Coolidge in Concert

7:30 p.m. Two-time Grammy award winner Rita Coolidge has a back catalog of pop classics and memorable chart-toppers from the 1970s onward, but her recent material harks back to a longtime passion for jazz standards, which she equally makes her own. Admission: $11–30. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College, 50 College Road, Supply. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

4/25 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour through downtown Wilmington galleries and studios showcases local art through opening receptions, demonstrations, artist discussions and exhibitions. Admission: Free. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

4/25 Relay for Life Benefit

6 p.m. Overnight community fundraising walk in which teams camp out and take turns walking around the track. Event includes opening and closing ceremonies, food, games, family activities and a luminary tribute. Proceeds benefit the American Cancer Society. Ashley High School, 555 Halyburton Memorial Parkway, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-4871 or relay.acsevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife.

4/25–26 Design Challenge Showcase

6–9 p.m. (Friday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Join 20 area interior designers as they reveal 10 by 10 rooms designed entirely from furniture, lighting, accessories and artwork purchased from Wilmington's Habitat ReStores. All furnishings and fixtures will be for sale. Preview party and awards are held on Friday and include food and beverages. Admission: $30/preview party and awards; $5/show and sale. Proceeds benefit Cape Fear Habitat for Hummanity. Cape Fear Community College Schwartz Center, 601 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-4744 or www.capefearhabitat.org.

4/25–27 Tattoo & Arts Expo

12–10 p.m. (Friday); 12 p.m. – 11 p.m. (Saturday); 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. (Sunday). Weekend–long expo featuring tattoo and pin-up contests, art showcases, seminars, workshops, art fusions, live entertainment, and dozens of vendors. Afterparty held at Ziggy's. Admission: $20/one-day pass; $35/two-day pass; $45/weekend pass. Wilmington Convention Center, 10 Convention Center Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5101 or www.capefearexpo.com.

4/26 Making Legends Local Gala

6 p.m. Fundraiser/celebration featuring a red carpet reception and stage show with local celebrities performing and lip-synching Broadway hits. Admission: $35/show only; $85/dinner and show. Proceeds benefit the Carousel Center. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-9898 or www.carouselcenter.org.

4/26 Healthy Kids Day

9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor family event encouraging healthy lifestyles and active living. Activities include tennis, soccer, golf, basketball, volleyball, hockey, T-ball, face painting, bouncy houses, games, prizes, giveaways, community booths and vendors. Admission: Free. Empie Park, 3405 Park Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-4631 or www.wilmingtonnc.gov/community-services/recreation/healthy-kids-day.

4/26 Nesting Birding Program

9:15–10:30 a.m. Join Carson Wood and James Abbott of the Coastal Plain Conservation Group for a program about the birds nesting in our region. Admission: Free. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgarden-inc.com.

4/26 Great Glow Run

8 p.m. Glow-in-the-dark 5k run through Battleship Park features glow sticks and glow-in-the-dark body paint. An afterglow party will be held at The Reel Café (100 South Front Street, Wilmington) for food, drinks and entertainment. Admission: $25/military; $35–50/general; $75/VIP. Proceeds benefit the Easter Seals UCP North Carolina and Virginia. Battleship NC Park, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 790-5921 or www.greatglowrun.com.

4/26 Flytrap Frolic

9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Family Earth Day event hosted by Coastal Land Trust, exploring the region's native carnivorous plants. Activities include presentations featuring live snakes from Halyburton Park, walking tours of the garden, kids' crafts, geo-catching and plant scavenger hunts. Admission: Free. Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, 3800 Canterbury Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 790-4524 or www.coastallandtrust.org/flytrap.

4/26 Symphony Orchestra

8 p.m. One of the most eminent examples of the symphonic poem, Ottorino Respighi's majestic *The Fountains of Rome*, which depicts Roman fountains at different times of the day. Opening the program is Mozart's *Symphony No. 25* and Czech composer Bohuslav Martinu's *Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra*. Admission: $6/student; $27/general. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.wilmingtonsymphony.org/fountainsofrome.

4/26 Beer Festival

12 – 7 p.m. Hops of Spring Beer Festival features various vendors, beer and wine samples and live music by local bands Annandale Heights, Blue Tang Bandits, Ragdoll and Madison Rising. Admission: $25–35. A portion of proceeds benefit Hope for the Warriors. 25488 US Highway 17, Surf City. Info: (910) 329-4446 or topsailchamber.org.

4/26 Metropolitan Opera

1–5:15 p.m. Music Director James Levine makes his long-awaited return to the podium, conducting Mozart's legendary *Cosi Fan Tutte*. Admission: $15–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/lumina.

4/26 Earth Day Festival

12–6 p.m. Family festival presented by The Earth Day Alliance to encourage environmental awareness and protection of natural resources. Activities include environmental exhibits, live music, kids' zone, food vendors, parade and a green market. Admission: Free. Hugh MacRae Park, 314 Pine Grove Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4452 or www.wilmingtonearthday.com.

4/26 Downtown Lifestyle Tour

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Downtown home tour showcases the diverse housing options available in

downtown Wilmington, including lofts and 'above the shop' living spaces. Admission: $15. Info: (910) 763-7349 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

4/26 MS Walk

10 a.m. Four-mile walk connecting people living with MS and those who care about them. Proceeds benefit life-changing programs and cutting-edge research through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. 301 Willard Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 792-1020 or walknct.nationalmssociety.org.

4/26 Walk to Defeat ALS

10 a.m. 3k family-friendly and pet-friendly walk held on the UNCW campus to bring hope to people living with ALS and raise money for a cure. Admission: Free. Proceeds benefit the ALS Association's care services and research. UNCW Harold Greene Track and Field, Hamilton Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 722-1587 or web.alsa.org/site/TR/Walks/NorthCarolina.

4/26–28 Parade of Homes

12–5 p.m. Annual home tour hosted by the Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association showcasing the craftsmanship, diversity and quality of fifty of the region's premier homes as well as the latest trends, materials and products in home building. Admission: Free. Info: (910) 799-2611 or www.wilmingtonparadeofhomes.com.

4/27 Birding Kayaking Tour

8–11:30 a.m. Join Wild Bird and Garden and Mahanaim Adventures for a morning of kayaking and bird watching on Town and Rice Creeks. Admission: $45. Includes kayaking equipment and guide. Reservations required. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

4/27 Free Family Concert

4 p.m. Annual free family concert featuring the Junior Division winner of the 37th Annual Richard R. Deas Student Concerto Competition accompanied by the Wilmington Symphony Youth Orchestra. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.uncw.edu/arts/kenancalendar.

4/27 Sacred Harp Singing

1:30–4 p.m. Cameron Art Museum and WHQR present the Wilmington Sacred Harp Singers performing an intense a cappella social singing style dating back to Colonial America. Admission: Free. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

4/28–30 Art Workshop

9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Art workshop lead by seasoned instructor, Bob Rankin. For painters of all skill levels, styles and painting media. Admission: $300–350. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (775) 291-7578 or www.wilmingtonart.org.

4/29New Horizons Band in Concert

7:30 p.m. OLLI New Horizons Band and the UNCW Wind Symphony perform, directed by Dr. John P. LaCognata. Admission: $5. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/arts/kenancalendar.

4/29–5/4 Ocean Festival

7:30 a.m. Five days of surfing with the WBLA Longboard Classic and SUP Surfing Pro-Am competitions, special guest stars and history surf lessons for kids. Waterman's Ocean Festival, held in conjunction with the Surfalorous Film Festival features the fiftieth anniversary screening of The Endless Summer by Bruce Brown. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: wblasurf.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Tuesday Improv Comedy

8 p.m. LitProv: Long Form Improv at Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or oldbooksonfrontst.com.

Tuesday Free Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Wednesday Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of the historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, landscaping and bedding plants, herbs, baked goods and the best in handmade art and craft items. Admission: Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wine Pairing

5–6:30 p.m. Come in for a Sweet n Savory wine pairing and learn about a specific style of wine every week as well as which foods best bring out its flavor. All bottles of wine are $5 off. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday Free Beer Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Pub on Facebook. Sweet n Savory Pub, 2012 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 679-8101 or www.thepubatsweetnsavory.com.

Wednesday Guided Meditation

6:15–7:15 p.m. A growing community of people who desire connection within themselves and with others. Instant Happiness (4/2); Balance (4/9); Relieving Guilt (4/16); Be-ing Present (4/23); Release Burden (4/30). McKay Healing Arts, 4916 Wrightsville Avenue, Wilmington. Donation: $10–15. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alllovehealing.com.

Wednesday ComedyNOW

8 p.m. Local, regional and national acts, open mics, standup, films and more. Bar and kitchen open. Tickets: $3. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Thursday & Friday Yoga at CAM

12–1 p.m. (Thursday); 5:30–6:30 p.m. (Friday). Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday & Sunday CAM Tours

7:30 p.m. (Thursday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday Guided Meditation

7–8 p.m. Guided meditation for resolving conflict. Port City Mediums, 21 Market Street. Admission: $15. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alllovehealing.com.

Friday & Saturday Free Tasting

6–8 p.m. (Friday); 12–5 p.m. (Saturday). Sample unique boutique wines as well as extra virgin olive oils and vinegars before you buy. Taste the Olive, The Forum, 1125 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-6457 or www.tastetheolive.com.

Saturday Guided Meditation

5:15–6 p.m. Success Fest: Realize Your Soul's Goals through guided meditation. Groove Jet Salon and Spa, 112 Princess Street, Wilmington. Admission: $15. Info: (949) 547-4402 or www.alllovehealing.com.

Saturday Farmers Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artists, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Products include fresh produce, herbs, flowers, meats, baked goods, canned items, wine, art and more. The market will not be held the weekend of the Azalea Festival. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

Saturday Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Port City People

Sleepy Hollow Season 1 Finale Viewing Party at Browncoat Pub and Theatre

January 20, 2013

Photographs by Ariel Keener

Josie Evans, David Pascua

Sleepy Hollow background artist and production crew

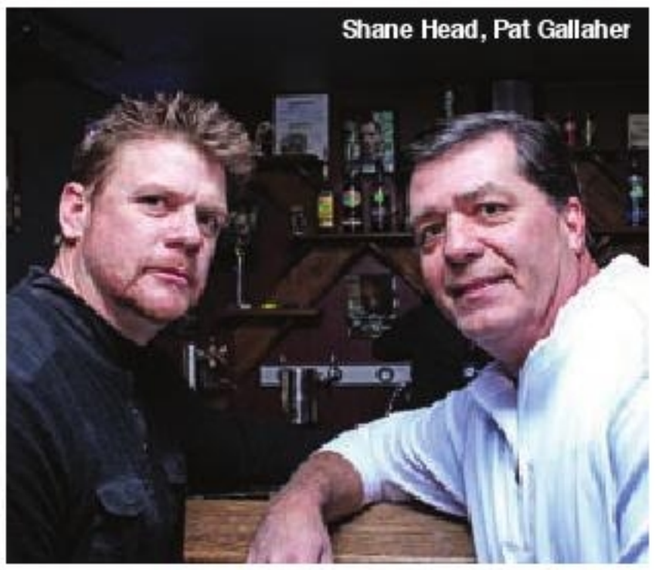
David Pascua, Ben Yemba

Michelle Pontious, Jon Clark, Laura Dixon

Billy & Chritsine Perry, Louis DiDomenico

Wes Howren, Stewart Price

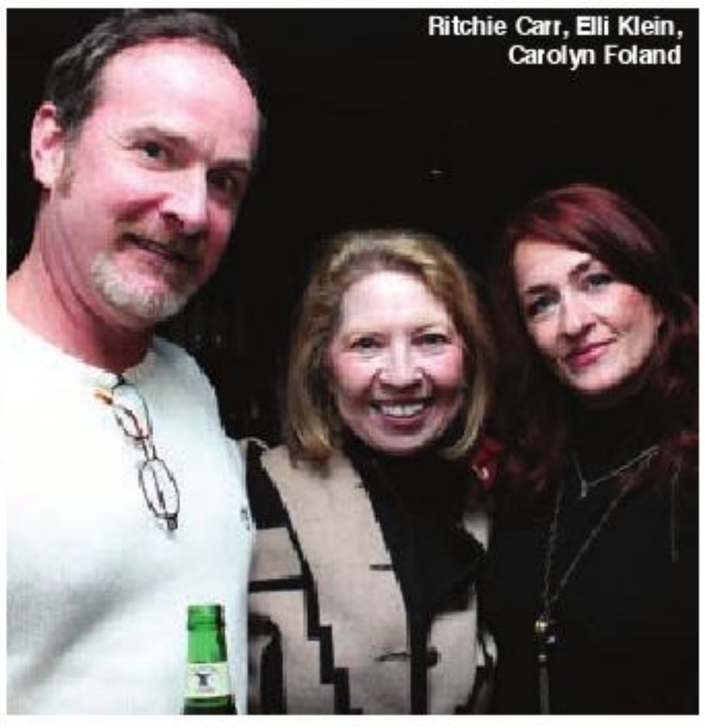
Lemuel Heida, David Pascua, Fred Carpenter, Ritchie Carr



Shane Head, Pat Gallaher

Alfonsa Terry, Bob Ashmore

Tom Chuvala, Heather Campbell, Aaron Moody



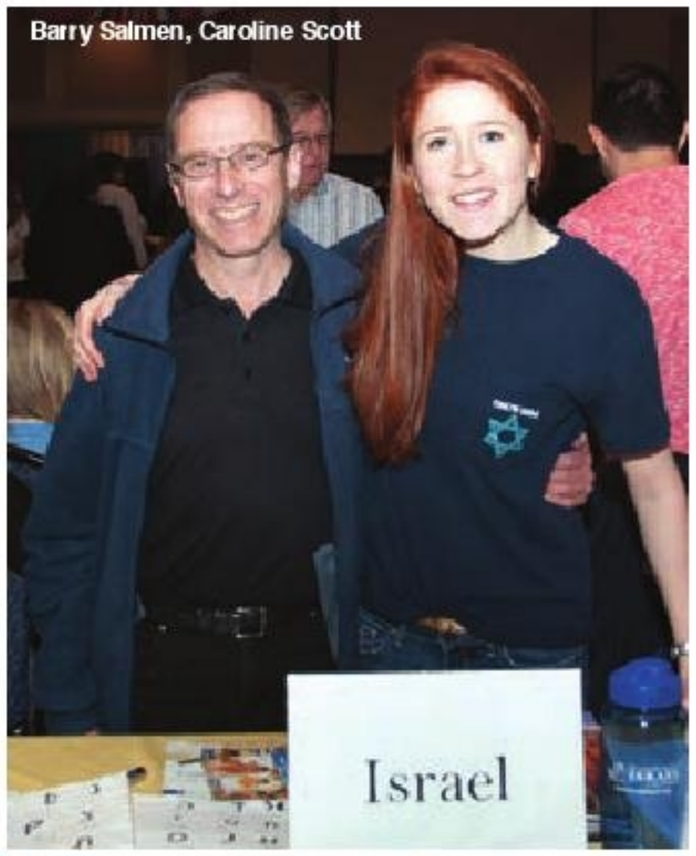
Ritchie Carr, Elli Klein, Carolyn Foland

Port City People

21st Annual Intercultural Festival
February 22, 2013
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Kseniia Ovchinnikova, Varia Spencer, Nicholas Leonhardt

Nari Chitambira, Odua Acquaah



Barry Salmen, Caroline Scott

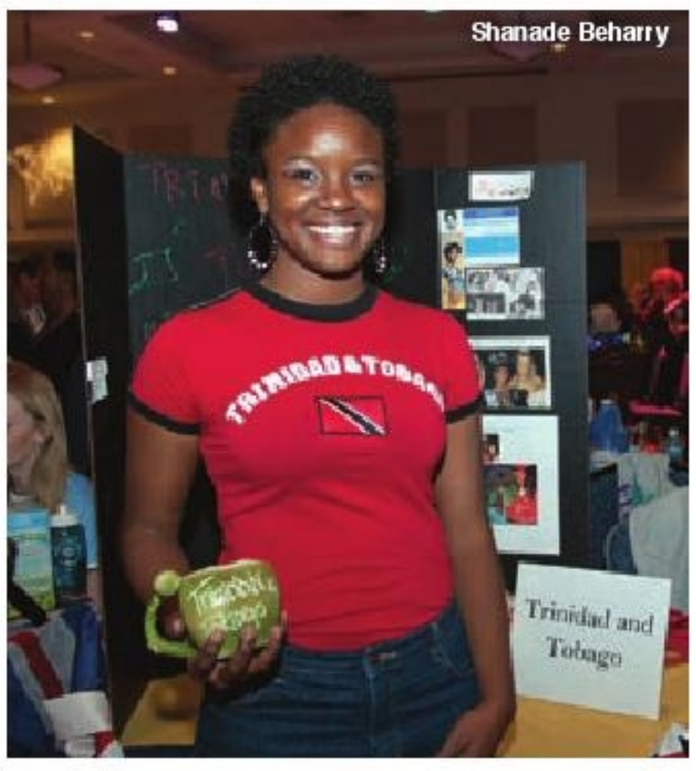
Axiom (World Music)

Scott Hargrave, Laura Dixon, Sammy Platt

Elyse Tankdano

Naazneen Bandukwala, Zoya Bandukwala, Patrick Downey, Leyla Muse, Parastoo Muse

Sofia Wells, Camille Moretti, Frances Esposito, Eleonora Venzetta



Shanade Beharry

Kelly Lazarczyk, Christopher Cantrell, Natasha Chamberlain

Ryukukoku Matsuri Daiko (Ryukyu Kingdom Festival Drums)

Port City People

2014 Cape Fear Beer Fest

Saturday, March, 1, 2013

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Shannon Roudie, Lauren Brienza, Vicki Wolski

Taylor Lee and Kelly Maultsby

Jenn Rojek, Ben Fusaro, Matt Kristek

Jason Bain, Page Snow, Micheal Marlowe

Morgan Klein, Michelle Yates

Terrie & Henry Depew

Mat Millner, Melissa Millner, Jeff Suddoth

Katie Healey, Toby & Erin Hurd

Sara & Easton Fry, Chelsea Vance, Carlos Zrake

C.J. Thompson, Taylor Huckabee

Tabitha & Walt Bagwell, Janet Boyd

Emilie Ferreira, Cameron Washburn, Kaleigh Register, Haleigh Nelson, Micah Yang

Port City People

An Evening on the Red Carpet
Annual fundraiser for the Cucalorus Film Festival
Sunday, March 2, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Jennifer Doll, Matthew Doll, June Doll, Fred Doll

Julian & Vivian Parlier-Burnett

Trey Herring, Kristie Pate

Jason Sargis, Jessica Eckler

Zak & Olena Kilson

Jason & Carly Forman

Sheila & Rob Hill

Frank & Erin Thompson

Nicholas & Kelsey Poorman

Dan Brawley

Gary Walker, Jenny Teague

Kate Gilbert, Tommy Van Arsdale

April's Wild Ride

By Astrid Stellanova

This month's got me nervous. The stars ain't looked this strange since the stock market crashed. But fear not, star children. Just heed Astrid's advice. "It's this old world and then the fireworks," Aunt Ethel used to say. What did that mean? I got no idea, but not everybody's in for a bumpy ride . . . some of us got our shocks fixed and our front ends aligned.

Aries (March 21–April 19)

You just ain't happy sitting still and letting things be. You're all about mixing it up, changing it up or messing in somebody else's business. You also like to be the giver (read: prone to be too extravagant, my cupcake). But this month, with Jupiter in Cancer, the stars have a very nice birthday gift for you. Good ole Jupiter is generous. Good luck and gifts are twinkling in that night sky above you, illuminating the whole month with some kind of Aries fairy dust. Another tip: It's a good time to sell property if you were thinking of it, including that swampy lot you bought ten years ago that just ain't perked. This is your chance to unload it. (Also, just so you know, it's a good time for investments.) Money is about to land in your hands — gift or loan, whose complaining, child?

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

You laid on the couch an awful lot last month, mooing like a sick cow. But this month, you are kicking that Taurus gusto into gear and charging onto the on-ramp of the highway of life. Full speed ahead and straight for a change! Wanna know how come? There's an eclipse on the 29th in Taurus. Aw, I know what you're thinking about that "c" word. Taurus doesn't necessarily like change, but good ch–ch– changes are here. You're in high spirits this month and I don't mean just because you scored your own barrel of Jack Daniel's Single Barrel Select at Sam's Club.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

Last month you were like a set of worn-out windshield wipers: swishing too hard and smearing up the windshield. You had all the right cards to play — you got them third, fourth and fifth chances . . . but you got stubborn. Somehow, you just couldn't, wouldn't and didn't. Move on. This month is a do-over: The money is good, my twin, and you got raises and windfalls in the stars. Keep a straight face when you get the raise. Don't wish you had held out for more, because it's only the start.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

I had to look twice in my Magic Eight Ball, because I didn't want to overpromise and underdeliver. This year is altogether different than last, and even a blind crab could see that times are going from good to better. It's been overdue, for sure, and now the planet of good fortune stays in your sign right until July. There's more, too: a payoff from something you completely forgot about. This could also mean you have memory issues.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

It seems weird to say it, but Leo is one of them signs that make you wonder. All that confidence out front, but underneath it, a whole lotta doubt. Sorta the Liz Taylor syndrome — like the beautiful woman who can't stop ruining her figure with beer and nachos. Well, you get to put that public charisma and star shine to work, because the stars love you by the middle of 2014. Think of it as coming into your stride — but it is a golden period ahead. Spanx or not.

Virgo (August 23 –September 22)

There's enough gas in your tank this month to get you to Nevada. But as good as that sounds, you been a little spend-thrifty and maybe, Baby, you ought to stay away from slots. That said, you got Mars driving you, and your considerable ambition. Friendships are rock solid, like I keep sayin'. Don't spend any energy on worrying about betrayals or conspiracy theories. Use your noggin to roll out a new venture, because it gets a green light.

Libra (September 23–October 22)

You got 2,499 Facebook friends who all either want to give you a job or invite you to a party. The first half of this year is like a career and social jackpot. Take advantage before July 16 when Jupiter leaves your house of golden opportunity in dang near everything. If you want 2,500 friends, push away from the desk and kick back. What doesn't come together by the end of this month will manifest itself by December. Also, you finally find that family reunion T-shirt you thought you lost.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

Your life is like one of those Taylor Swift songs; that catchy tune sounds so hummy/sunny before you realize she is singing about how she's going to castrate her old boyfriend with a wing nut. You have Scorpio in your sign this month, and you've been doing a lot of new things with mixed results. The eclipse on April 28 will be very interesting for you, and every one of your exes. That foreigner may be worth your while. At least meet for drinks.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

You caught a fast wave that built from the end of the new moon last month. It was fun and fast, but then you realized it knocked your swimsuit off. No worries. Duck down and keep your lower half out of sight and just tread, Baby. Your deadbeat ex winds up having to settle an old debt. By the end of the month you are going to be in high cotton financially. Only you know how to make profit off cotton.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

The planets may have challenged you last year, but this year, uh huh. Different story. You, cool thing, finally see the benefit of not letting life crush you. It's a whole new game, Baby, and just you wait. If you are still single, wedding bells may jingle for you yet this year. If not a wedding, a surprise. Something's jingling, and you'll be tingling. Plus, you have an unusual number of good hair days coming up before we get into the heat and humidity cycle.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

Empty the tip jar and get yourself that luxury item you've been saving up for — don't deny yourself. That eclipse on April 28 is going to bring some nice progress for your sign, and not just in one dimension. Work, health, love, name it. You're going to be speeding toward the good life faster than Danica Patrick with a Petty on her rear.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

Until July, you have extra special work mojo . . . and friends in high places are going to reach a hand to pull you on up. (What took them so long, you wonder? So do I, little fishy.) But a lunar eclipse on the 15th means you best keep your money in your wallet — it will impact your finances. And just consider a different hair color. It's Astrid's cheapest trick, but tried and true. A new do will make you feel better, and in my humble opinion might change the tide of human events. At least for you.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

The Day the Music Died

(Or how a few quiet moments felt like a short eternity for lanky Dennis Hobbie)

By Clyde Edgerton

Sometime in 1963:

I'm 19 years old, sitting at an electric piano, auditioning to play in an established Durham, North Carolina, rock 'n' roll band — the Seven Keys, all strangers to me, except for the lead guitar player, John Nichols, a friend.

The six of them are kind of standing around, getting ready to play something.

I'm asked, "Do you know the album 'Live at the Apollo'?"

"Well, yes," I say, lying.

I really want this gig. I do not know that "Live at the Apollo" is the name of the new James Brown release — the entire album, nonstop, about to be played on local black and white pop music radio stations, each of the eleven songs flowing seamlessly into the next one (around thirty-five minutes of back-to-back rhythm and blues tunes), delivered with an energy rarely (if ever) exceeded on any album before or since.

I mumble, bumble my way through a few songs, and make the cut. I become one of the Seven Keys — about a year ahead of the The British Invasion.

Dennis Hobbie, our lead singer — fun-loving, tall, lanky, blond — wants to be James Brown. The band learns and plays all eleven songs on "Live at the Apollo," with Dennis singing and moving as much like James Brown as he can: fast feet, hands on belt. The rest of us — guitar, bass, drums, sax, trumpet, keyboards — sound as much like the Flames, Brown's backup band, as we're able. Dennis even does the bit with the cape — most of you probably know about that. If not, Google "James Brown, 'Please, Please, Please'".

Besides the album, played straight through, we also cover other pop tunes of the day, such as "I Got A Woman," by Ray Charles, "Last Date," by Floyd Cramer, "Memphis," by Lonnie Mack, and "Green Onions," by Booker T and the M.G.s.

Beyond occasional shows at frat parties and dance clubs, our regular Saturday night gig is at a Durham dance hall and bar called The Castaway Club, a converted elementary school (Murphey School) where we perform on stage in the old auditorium. All those wooden seats have been unscrewed from the floor and removed. Just down the hallway, a classroom has been converted to a bar, and across the hall from the bar a kitchen serves up hot dogs.

We sounded about as much like James Brown and the famous Flames as seven white boys could. Dennis would come on stage at the start of "Please, Please," complete with cape, and during the course of that song would fall to one knee, mic stand in hand, and then end up *lying on the floor.* At this time: sudden band silence, then Dennis screamed, "Please, *please!*" and the electric bass, with a little "de-dum, dum, dum," came in, followed by the whole band, so Dennis could stagger to his feet and keep singing.

One night, six of us plotted.

Lanky Dennis came out in the cape, started singing, soon knelt, then fell to the floor and during the planned silence, screamed, "Please, *please!*" But the electric bass and the rest of us remained silent. We just stood there. A few heads turned from the dance floor.

We stood silently.

Dennis rolled to where he could see us. His eyes pleaded. "Please, *please!*" he sort of shouted into the mic.

We stood. Stones. People stopped dancing.

Dennis got to his knees, knelt. "Please, please . . . please!" he sang, sort of nodding the beat, panic-eyed.

De-dum, dum, dum . . . we played the song, the crowd returned to dancing, Dennis was fully embarrassed, but recovered, and by the final chord was laughing with the rest of us.

The above scene I've remembered all my life and finally, over forty years after it happened (just a few years ago), I put it in a novel called *The Night Train*, but prior to publication, because of timing-pacing-plot decisions, the scene was cut.

I'm happy now for the opportunity to give those few moments from long ago the telling that memory tells me it deserves.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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